

REAL GUY TRANSFORMED: 'HOW I LOST 62KG'

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GIFT GUIDE
PAGE 90

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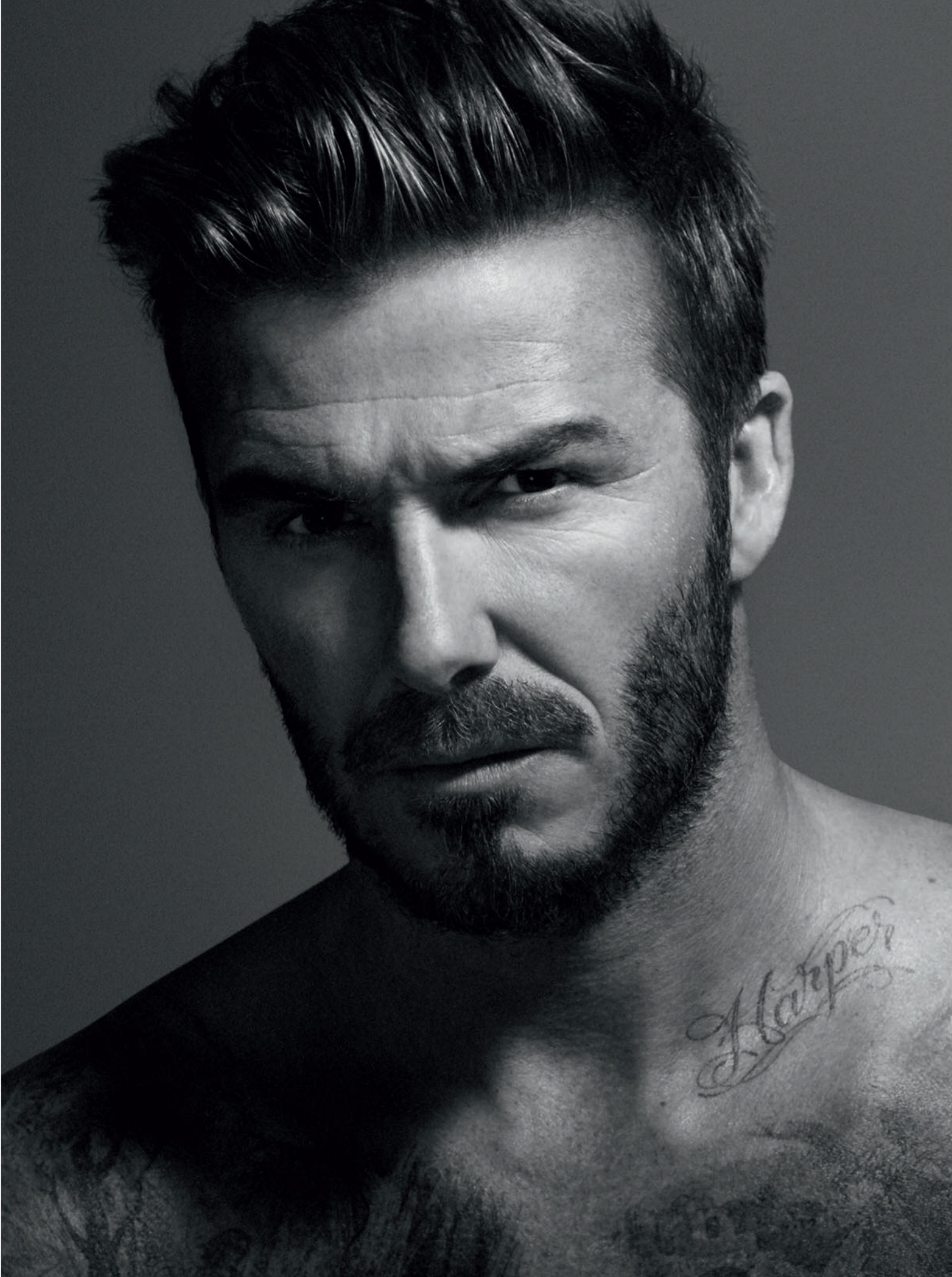
DAVID BECKHAM

B E Y O N D

IT ALL STARTS WITH A DREAM



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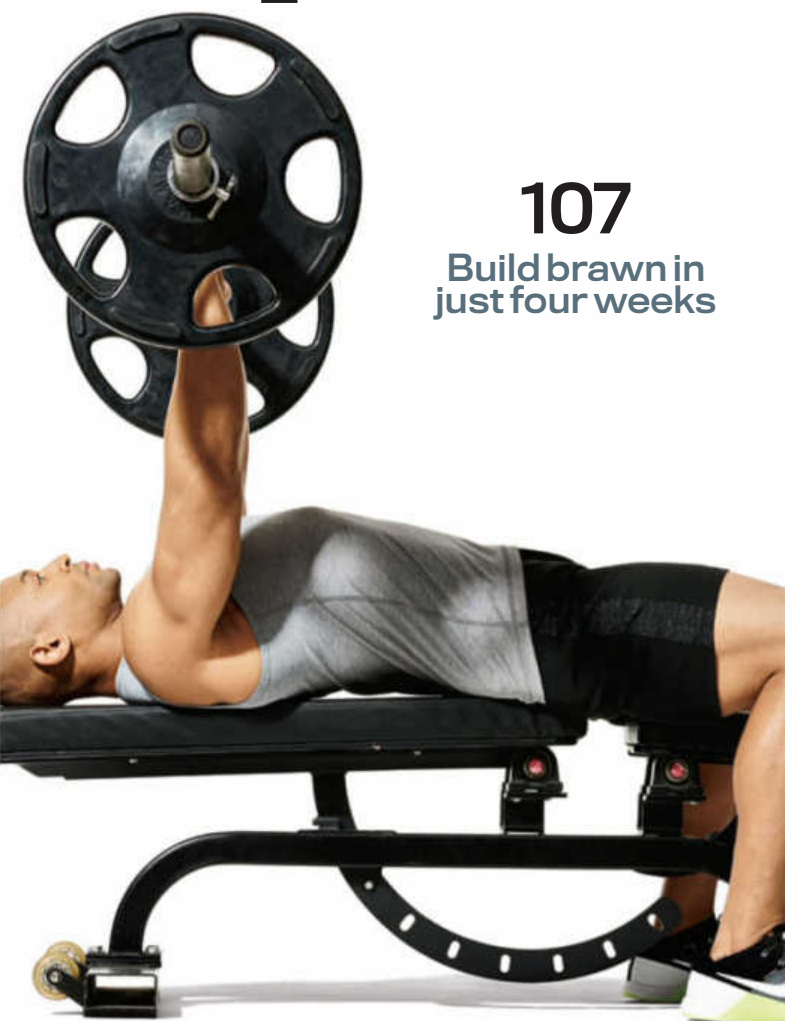
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VIEW FROM THE TOP



The Smiling Assassin



12 ISSUES FOR
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Your life, like mine, is probably full of “have to”. You have to get to work; you have to look after the kids, you have to get to that meeting, reply to those emails, get that thing, fix that do-hickey... you have to do so many things it’s an endless spin of responsibility and action. Time sweeps by. Your to-do list grows. You’re getting things done, but feel like you’re running behind. Workouts are slipping. Bad dietary habits are forming. Welcome to stress land (page 82).


Stress will kill you quicker than almost anything. It’s the foundation of the big four for men: cancer, heart disease, diabetes and depression. It creeps up on you because it hides in the folds of responsibility and manhood and often its causes are the elements of successful life. And its symptoms are, to many men, seemingly innocuous: crankiness, trouble sleeping, a bender or two, bit of anxiety, mild depression, etc.


I was recently encouraged by my wife to go (read: dragged along) to Gwinganna, a ritzy health retreat in the Gold Coast hinterland. I logged off, switched off and powered down and, along with a couple of hardcore gym workouts, did a lot of what I would have considered “hippy shit”. We strolled, meditated, did relaxation and yoga classes, got massages and performed gentle *qigong* to the sunrise. A few days later, and that “hippy shit” had turned cranky, busy, sleepless, always-on-his-phone Todd into a nice bloke again, according to my wife.

I tell this tale because after 20 years in the health and fitness industry, I should have known better. Stress builds slowly but kills quickly. And it was creeping up on me. If any of this has resonated, it could be sidling up next to you, smiling, telling you that you “have to” do this and that. You don’t. Trust me. Make sure you look after your physical and mental health first. Stay strong, my friends.

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MEN'S FITNESS

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www.mensfitnessmagazine.com.au

Men's Fitness is published 12 times a year. Printed by Offset Alpine, Australian and New Zealand distribution by Network Services. Tel: 1300 131 169. Copyright © 2015 Odysseus Publishing Pty Ltd and Weider Publications, LLC. Australian Men's Fitness is published under licence from Weider Publications, LLC. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated or converted into machine-readable form or language without the written consent of the publisher. Men's Fitness is a trademark of Weider Publications, LLC and is used under licence from Weider Publications, LLC and may not be used or reproduced without permission from Weider Publications, LLC. Articles express the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Publisher, Editor or Odysseus Publishing Pty Limited. ISSN 1836-0714.

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Q IF I'M HAPPY WITH MY BODY, HOW MUCH DO I NEED TO WORRY ABOUT SUGAR?

"Sugar gets digested very quickly, which can lead to spikes in blood sugar, often followed by a crash," says nutritionist Jo Travers. "Over time, this can interfere with your insulin production, and that can lead to chronic disease — diabetes, basically. If you really can't resist sugary snacks, eat them alongside foods with a lower glycaemic index, such as wholegrains and veg, to slow your digestion." If nothing else, it'll wreck your teeth, so step away from the Mars bar, mate.

Q I TRAIN SIX TIMES A WEEK — WEIGHTS AND ROAD RUNNING — BUT MY BODY FAT'S 16% AND IT WON'T BUDGE. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

"I'd say training isn't the problem," says coach Steve Kowalenko of W10 Performance. "What's happening the rest of the week? Look at diet, hydration, sleep and stress." Cutting back on processed foods, getting eight hours' sleep regularly and drinking black tea have all been shown to reduce your levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which encourages fat storage.



Q IS USING SPRING-LOADED RUNNING SHOES CHEATING?

Most shoes are designed to maximise the power of each stride, but some take it a step further — such as the innovative Enko Running shoe, which uses springs to retain energy that's normally dispersed when your foot hits the ground and give you a boost. Is it cheating? Well, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) has said the shoe wouldn't be allowed in competition. We'll call that a yes.

Use kettlebells to strengthen your leg muscles for a higher jump.



Q I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SLAM DUNK. HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY VERTICAL JUMP?

■ "Coach Mac" of *basketballforcoaches.com* has a plan he calls the Coach Mac Vertical Jump Program, which includes slow-motion squats, tuck and lateral jumps, jump lunges and toe raises. "Adding five to ten minutes of skipping a day to your routine will have a big effect," the coach adds. "The combination of explosiveness and timing translate very well to your jump." Next step: use kettlebell powerbombs — do a swing as normal, then "spike" the bell down between your legs before repeating the move. The increased eccentric loading makes your calves and achilles tendons work overtime.

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RUNS



September 20 Blackmores Sydney Running Festival

Where: Sydney, NSW
What: With a 3.5km fun run, 9km bridge run, a half marathon and the Sydney Marathon itself, this festival offers a scenic challenge for every runner.
Contact: sydneyrunningfestival.com.au



October 18 Medibank Melbourne Marathon Festival

Where: Melbourne, VIC
What: Run for fun over 5.7km or 10km or get serious and enter the half or full marathon, finishing at the MCG.
Contact: melbourne-marathon.com.au



November 1 Tropical Journeys Great Barrier Reef Marathon Festival

Where: Port Douglas, QLD
What: Run the 74km JCU Ultra Marathon, the 42km or the 21km half marathon along the fringing reefs.
Contact: greatbarrierreefmarathon.com.au

RIDES



September 13 Amy's Gran Fondo

Where: Lorne, VIC
What: Cycle the Great Ocean Road – minus the cars – over 40km or 110km in a super-safe ride that's also a qualifier for the 2016 Amateur World Road Championships in Perth.
Contact: amysgranfondo.org.au



October 18 Real Insurance Spring Cycle

Where: Sydney, NSW
What: Pedal over the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge and make your way to Olympic Park on the 50km Classic Ride or feel the burn on the 100km Challenge Ride.
Contact: springcycle.com.au



November 19-22 Avanti Plus Hellfire Cup

Where: Kellieville, TAS
What: Tear your way through rugged Tassie on a four-day stage race, either solo or in pairs. Camping at the race village is free and lunches are provided.
Contact: hellfirecup.com

TRIATHLONS



September 13 IRONMAN 70.3 Sunshine Coast

Where: Mooloolaba, QLD
What: You're looking at a 1.9km ocean swim, 90km cycle on smooth, fast roads and 21.1km seaside run. Gear up and go for it!
Contact: ap.ironman.com



October 18 Rottneest Island Triathlon

Where: Rottneest Island, WA
What: Meet a quokka and enjoy the perfect lead-in race to Ironman Western Australia as you compete in a sprint or long-course tri.
Contact: rotnesttriathlonfestival.com.au



November 28-29 Bribie Island Triathlon

Where: Bribie Island, QLD
What: Experience the beauty of Bribie while you smash out a PB. With its tide-assisted swim, flat, fast cycle and shaded run, it's a favourite among racers.
Contact: bribietri.com

SWIMS



September 13 Green Island Ocean Swim

Where: Cairns, QLD
What: Choose from a 1.5km or 3km course (both open to ages 12 and up) as you swim in the warm waters of the Great Barrier Reef.
Contact: green-island.com.au/oceanswim



October 15-17 Mana Fiji SwimFest

Where: Fiji
What: Take your holiday activities to a whole new level with a 10km swim around stunning Mana Island. There are also 5km, 3km and 1km options.
Contact: oceanswims.com



November 29 Coogee Island Challenge

Where: Coogee, NSW
What: Power your way around Wedding Cake Island on a 2.4km course or, if you're just starting out, give the 1km Splash and Dash a red-hot go.
Contact: oceanswims.com.au

ADVENTURE



September 5 The Stampede

Where: Brisbane, QLD
What: Battle a wild obstacle course, then laugh about the thrills'n'spills over a well-deserved coldie. There are 5km, 10km, junior (no beer) and "unlimited" options.
Contact: thestampede.com.au



October 10 The Great Adventure Challenge

Where: Brisbane, QLD
What: Charity team event featuring MTB, trail running, kayaking and coasteering.
Contact: greatadventurechallenge.com.au



November 7 Raw Challenge

Where: Hobart, TAS
What: An 8km obstacle race with a difference, you'll find yourself climbing over shipping containers, flying down water slides and crawling through tunnels. Epic!
Contact: rawchallenge.com.au

Got an event in your state that MF readers can train for in 2015? Email details to ashley@mensfitnessmagazine.com.au with a couple of good action photos.

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Grand tour

Most ordinary people are content to stand still and take in the sights of the Grand Canyon. American endurance legend Max King, however, felt he needed to get a bit more interactive. "It wasn't a race or anything," says King. "But who wouldn't want to run in a place like that?"

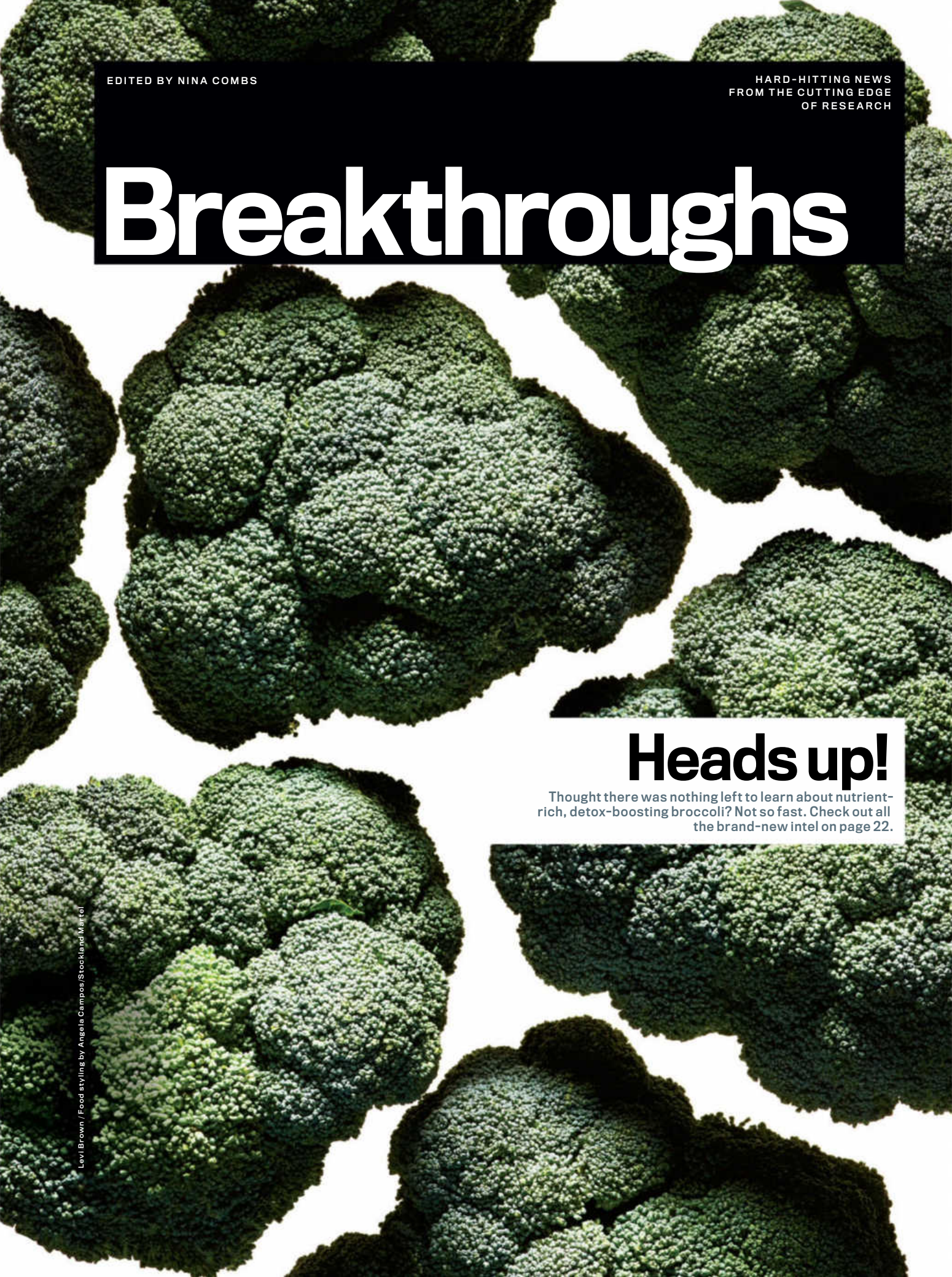
This shot was taken at Shoshone Point on the South Rim at the end of King's double crossing of the Canyon. "It's 68km from rim to rim and back again," King says. "The 1,500m descent is tough on your legs – and then you have to run up the other side. The heat reached 33° and I ran out of water heading back out of the canyon... I had to walk the last three kilometres because I was so dehydrated." And you thought your last hill-sprint session was tough.



Words: Matt Huckle Photography: David Clifford

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EDITED BY NINA COMBS

HARD-HITTING NEWS
FROM THE CUTTING EDGE
OF RESEARCH

Breakthroughs

Heads up!

Thought there was nothing left to learn about nutrient-rich, detox-boosting broccoli? Not so fast. Check out all the brand-new intel on page 22.

Holy shiitake! These are some healthy mushrooms

■ Asian mushrooms have been picked and eaten fresh or dried and powdered for thousands of years for use in traditional Chinese medicine. Now a new study is adding to their mystique – and their street cred. Eating one 120g serving of dried, reconstituted shiitake mushrooms a day for four weeks can boost your immunity by measurably increasing killer T cells and antibody levels – both badass assassins for the immune system, Florida University in the US reports. Pick up dried shiitakes at a natural market and add them while cooking vegetable soup, or soak them for up to eight hours, rinse and enjoy them with your favourite proteins and veggies.

Maple syrup finally does something right

■ Your favourite pancake topper may be good for more than topping pancakes.

It could actually be added to

antibiotics to help them kill germs, say scientists at McGill University in Canada, who made concentrated extracts from maple syrup (which raised its antioxidant levels), then applied the syrup solution to common harmful bacteria strains like *E. coli*. When they added antibiotics, voilà: they had an antimicrobial superkiller that laid to waste whole bacteria communities.

Not very appetising to think about – but it does mean that adding natural compounds to doses of antibiotics could boost their bacteria-busting power and maybe even fight drug-resistant bacteria strains.

Cut calories, cut muscle?

■ Severely limiting how many calories you eat may combat heart disease and even extend your life, research suggests. But don't try it when you're young or your muscles may pay the price.

In a new study conducted in China, the calorie intake of young and middle-aged rats was cut by 40%. And, surprise: young rats lost muscle mass, but older rats kept it, along with a more youthful metabolism. In short, they got to

kick some young mouse arse for a while.

So wait till midlife to test extreme calorie reduction; and even then, cut no more than 35% – a 40% drop isn't recommended for humans (not even supermodels).

SOURCE: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHYSIOLOGY-ENDOCRINOLOGY AND METABOLISM

Soft drinks' allure continues to fizzle

■ Studies confirming that soft drink really is as bad for us as we think continue to pile up – so, hey, here's one more.

In the first-ever study to establish a direct link between sugar-added soft drink and heart-disease risk, University of California Davis in the US reports that subjects who downed drinks with low, medium and high amounts – read: any amount – of high-fructose corn syrup for two weeks raised their (heart-damaging) blood levels of LDL, or “bad”, cholesterol and triglycerides.

And though another UCD study found that sugary beverages can relieve stress by blunting cortisol, it also found that stress relief was actually just the start of an unhealthy cycle: stress → drinking soft drink → relief → more stress → more soft drink, which led to weight gain. So hardly a ringing endorsement.

With Roy Morgan research reporting 53% of Australians 24-34 are drinking these sugar bombs at least once a week, it's time to ditch soft drink and up your intake of water.



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Underhand tactics

Want a biceps-builder that'll also office-proof your lower back? The reverse-grip row is the move for you.

If the bent-over row isn't already a part of your pulling strategy – or you don't have a pulling strategy – it's time to rectify the situation, and fast. This move works the muscle fibres in your biceps in a diagonal orientation, which means the strength you develop transfers to horizontal and vertical pulls,

and holding a flat-backed position throughout will do wonders for your posture – even when you head back to your desk. But there's more. By using an underhand grip you'll put your biceps under more load than any type of curl can provide, getting your fast-twitch fibres firing and forcing growth. Time to put it in reverse.

How to do it

Sets 3 Reps 8

■ Grasp the bar with an underhand grip, hands slightly wider than shoulder width. Push your hips back, brace

your abs and retract your shoulders. The bar should sit slightly above your knees. Drive your elbows back until the bar almost touches your abs. Squeeze your back muscles at the top, then lower under control. If the weight drops like a rock, it's too heavy. Add this to bench day and get on the grow.



Stronger in seconds

By improving your neural drive – the number of fast-twitch muscle fibres your body is willing to fire at once – you can add up to 12% to your big lifts in seconds.



BRACE YOURSELF

Before a lift, imagine you're about to be hit in the stomach. The contraction around your spine gives you a solid base, decreasing unnecessary movement that dissipates force.



CRUSH THE BAR

Before you bench, grip the bar as hard as you can – you should feel your forearms, shoulders and pecs tighten. By creating a stable base, you'll be able to push harder.



CROSS YOUR FEET

By crossing your feet (and pressing your ankles together) during pullups, you'll engage your glutes – and promote full-body muscle firing. Yes, it genuinely helps your pulling.



THINK FAST

However heavy you're lifting, move as if you intend to send the weights flying. The increased drive from your brain will ramp up force production and make the lift feel easier. Just don't actually let go.



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Broccoli bonanza

Broc, stock & barrel

There's some surprising news about broccoli, one of the healthiest, tastiest (if you don't boil the life out of it, that is) vegetables on earth.

NO. 1

You're cooking it to death

■ A recent survey found that 76% of people cook broccoli for way too long — 10 minutes or more — and 13% think high heat will actually activate its healthy enzymes.

In fact, it's just the opposite: long, hot blasts of heat degrade essential nutrients and deplete the valuable phytonutrient glucoraphanin, which protects against oxidation and cellular stress.

To max broccoli's benefits, follow these cooking steps:

- Cut florets into small pieces and slice stems thinly to rupture cell walls, allowing the enzyme myrosinase, a precursor to glucoraphanin, to form.
- Squeeze a little lemon juice over chopped broccoli to help activate even more myrosinase.
- Let broccoli sit for 5 minutes for maximum enzyme creation.
- Steam the broccoli for up to 5 minutes on stove or in microwave till it turns bright green.

NO. 2

There's a new "super" broc coming to town

■ In the early '80s, British scientists went on a global expedition to find wild broccoli varieties with more phytonutrients. In Italy, they came upon one with naturally souped-up glucoraphanin. They naturally cross-pollinated it with regular broccoli and eventually one of its descendants birthed a new broccoli that's grown in California and may be on the market here soon.

Dubbed Beneforté, the hybrid has two to three times more glucoraphanin than regular broc, so eating just 1.5 cups a week (word on the street is it tastes like regular broccoli) can lower LDL, or bad, cholesterol 6% in just 12 weeks, independent UK research from the University of Reading found.

Beneforté comes washed and trimmed in breathable bags to extend freshness. beneforte.com

Sproutageous. Fresh broccoli sprouts can have up to 100 times more antioxidants than broccoli florets themselves.

NO. 3

Sprouts do your mouth a favour

■ Don't want to gnaw on a head of broccoli tonight? Add some crisp broccoli sprouts to your salad or sandwich, or just eat them plain. It's a smart move: broc sprouts grown for only three days can have up to 100 times more glucoraphanin

than mature broccoli heads.

Plus, an extract made from sprouts can reduce the number and frequency of oral cancer tumors, a US study on mice from the University of Pittsburgh has shown. So our anticarcinogen arsenal may soon have a new weapon.



How to grow your own sprouts

- Rinse 3 tbsp organic seeds (available online). Place in bowl of water; soak 6–24 hours. Drain, then rinse again.
- Put wet paper towels in bottom of a sterilised container; sprinkle a thin layer of seeds on top. Cover with plastic wrap with air holes.
- Place near window (not in direct sun).
- When thick growth has tiny leaves (usually 3–5 days) rinse & remove seed hulls.

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"I've always considered myself a very active person. I played in a men's summer soccer league, I surf, I take part in weekly kickboxing & Jiu-Jitsu classes, all the while having exercise & cardio regimens at my local gym on a semi daily basis.

My diet and nutrition have always been consistent even though I often ate on the run. I used the principles most people are familiar with... Eat good proteins, eat your greens, and try to keep the junk food intake to a minimum. But yet still, I never had the six pack I've always wanted.



It wasn't till I saw Mike Dolce and Thiago Alves on TV at a fight weigh in that the light bulb went off to try something out of my normal routine and follow a diet. Summer was coming up in a month and I wanted that body, so I started **3 Weeks To Shredded** and the rest was history."

- Robert, 3 Weeks To Shredded



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Success

Breakthroughs

Say thank you and your heart will thank you

■ Talk about easy — no pushups, no cardio, no rabbit-food diet. All it takes to give your heart a healthy boost is a little bit of gratitude.

Researchers at UC San Diego in the US asked 186 individuals who'd had Stage B heart failure for at least three months to fill out questionnaires measuring indicators like spiritual and emotional wellbeing (including how thankful subjects generally felt), depressive

symptoms, sleep quality, fatigue and inflammatory markers.

Results showed that those who felt and expressed the most gratitude also experienced happier moods, slept better, were less tired and had less cellular inflammation — all of which improved their prognosis for dealing with heart disease.

"Gratitude supports our wellbeing by shifting our attention from endless self-focused rumination to connecting with the world around us," says lead author Dr Paul J Mills.

Shoulda stuck with those piano lessons...

■ A robot could be doing your work very soon — that is, unless you can sing, write or draw. According to research conducted in Britain, creative artists are less likely to be replaced by automation than are workers in other professions.

By Zeus! Getting laid more = getting paid more

■ Now here's some advice you can take to the bank and the bedroom: have more sex and you'll make more money.

So says a study out of England's

Anglia Ruskin Uni, which compared data (demographics, health, earnings, sexual activity) on 7,500-plus Greeks and found that those who had sex two to three times a week earned about 4.5% more than their less-lucky compatriots. Researchers theorise that being more fulfilled at home makes people more successful at work.

"Being sexually active seems to be a proxy for good health," says study honcho Dr Nick Drydakos, "and that itself correlates with having higher energy for everything, including work."

Go ahead, start your own experiment at home tonight.

Boost your MacGyver factor

■ You never know where danger lurks, but you don't have to carry a Ruger or own a rottweiler to always be prepared. According to the entertaining new book *A Guide to Improvised Weaponry* (if a book on how to stab a villain's leg with a pencil-turned-shoe-spike can be considered "entertaining"), no matter where you are, a weapon of self-defence is right at your fingertips. Yes, say authors Terry Schappert — host of Discovery Channel's *Dude, You're Screwed* — and Adam Slutsky, just a little quick, out-of-the-box thinking can make you more Bond than Boy Scout. A thug threatens your Sunday brunch? Throw a handful of salt in his face, then use your girlfriend's high heel as a dagger. That plate of Brie? It's now a throat-crushing saucer of death. Armaments abound: a comb acts as a toothy truncheon; a toilet plunger turns into a poleaxe; a car antenna is a flail. "There's always something you can use to surprise and overwhelm an enemy," says Schappert. "He picked you because he thought he could take you. Now he's going, 'What am I dealing with?'" Some "weapons" (a chocolate bar smashed into a goon's eyes) may sound silly, Schappert admits, but thinking creatively could be the difference between life and death. "Knowing that, you'll be more confident." Pack a Mars Bar just to be safe. — JEFF TOMKO

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CHICKS DIG
TATTS ON GUYS
BECAUSE THEY
MARK YOU OUT
FROM THE
CROWD.

Blue-block your way to a good night's sleep

■ It's a good thing BluBlocker sunglasses — those windscreen-size, orange-tinted shades from infomercials of yore — are now available in great-looking styles. Because you're going to want to start wearing them at home. At night. Why? So you can sleep.

Turns out the orange-tinted lenses do more than just cancel out the sun's blue light waves, which research suggests can cause macular degeneration. Swiss researchers have now discovered the specs also block the blue glow from smartphone, tablet or laptop LEDs, which the eyes' retinal photoreceptors read as "daytime", causing them to signal the body not to produce the sleep hormone melatonin. Indeed, test subjects who wore orange lenses while scanning screens had significantly more

melatonin in their saliva than those who sported clear lenses, the *Journal of Adolescent Health* reports.

So, blue-block when using your devices in the evening, then enjoy a nice, restful sleep. Once your girlfriend stops laughing at you, that is.

Ditch the red tie to score the job

■ Most blokes don the red tie when they want to send out a signal of confidence and power in a job interview or assert their personality in work situations. Some more daring dudes may even wear a scarlet-coloured shirt.

But a new study from Durham University in the UK and published in *Biology Letters* reports that red clothing of any description gives off a "dominant" or aggro vibe which alienates colleagues and reduces trustworthiness.

In the study, both sexes associated red with dominance and overbearing behaviour.

"The implications are that people may wish to think carefully about wearing red in social situations and perhaps important meetings, such as job interviews," says researcher Diana Wildemann.

If you want to sport something within the red palette, try maroon — um, unless you're a New South Welshman...

Darwin wants you to get a tattoo

■ Who'd think growing your facial hair or having "Mum" or "I love Cheryl" inked on your arm could help you score with the ladies?

It's just the law of the jungle, says a new University of Western Australia

study. Female primates, it found, judge males' rank and attractiveness based on visible markers. Think: long noses on proboscis monkeys, silver hair on hamadryas baboons and cheek flanges on orangutans.

For us, a marker could be an artful piercing, vibrant tattoo or neat beard (even baboon babes turn their noses up at grizzly faces).

And the more competition for chicks, the more critical the markers. "In large groups of strangers, we need a quick tool to evaluate a mate's strength and quality," says study head Dr Cyril Grueter.

Beards, tats and earrings not your style? Ramp up your look with jauntier socks, ties or tees.

thank you smooth mover

thank you Ghost 8

Thank you BioMoGo DNA midsole for instant, adaptive cushioning. Your virtually seamless upper keeps it comfy while the full-length segmented crash pad gives a smooth ride. Learn more at brooksrunning.com.au

thank you running





Hit the gym, then the mattress...

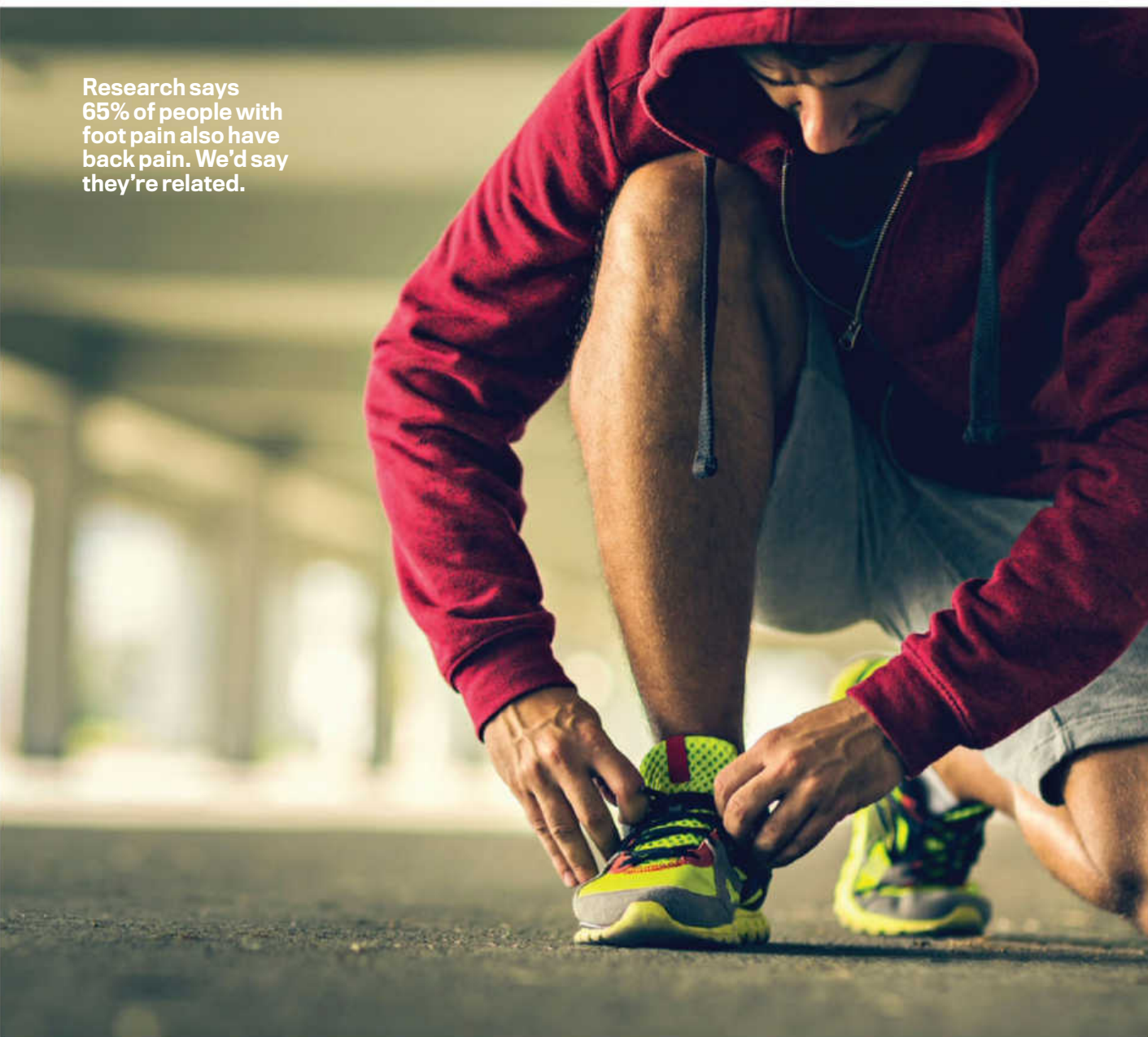
Want better, longer-lasting sex without popping a pill? Of course you do – and more time in the gym could be the answer. Researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in the US have discovered a link between regular workouts and quality of intercourse. “This study is the first to link the benefits of exercise in relation to improved erectile and sexual function in a racially diverse group of patients,” says study head Dr Adriana Vidal. Men who reported more frequent exercise, a total of 18 metabolic equivalents, or METS, per week, had higher sexual function scores. A total of 18 METS is the equivalent of two hours of strenuous exercise, 3.5 hours of moderate exercise or six hours of light exercise.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO MAKE LIFE WORK FOR YOU

Game Changers



Research says 65% of people with foot pain also have back pain. We'd say they're related.



Feet of strength

Annoying foot issues can create imbalances elsewhere in your body and make your life miserable. Here's how to identify them and get back on your feet. **By Lara Rosenbaum**

YOUR BACK PAIN MAY NOT BE THE RESULT OF weak abs or that extra set of deadlifts you insisted on cranking out. Instead, it could be coming from your feet of all places. As the foundation for your entire body, even the slightest issue with your feet can create a ripple effect, manifesting as joint stress, back pain or simply a kink in your alignment that makes you more prone to injuries in your workouts. (Recent American research from the Podiatric Medical Association shows 65% of people with foot pain have back pain, too.) We talked to podiatrist Pushpa Chauhan and Golden Harper, a world-record marathoner, about the common foot problems that could be royally screwing up the rest of your body – and how to fix them.

Plantar Fasciitis

■ Plantar fasciitis can cause extreme pain in the heel and arch. It occurs when the fascia (tissue) around those parts of the foot becomes inflamed, often the result of wearing ill-fitting shoes that don't have proper arch support. According to Chauhan, the fascia literally tears away from your heel, and if you don't treat the issue, you could not only suffer more inflammation and pain but also develop heel spurs.

FIX IT: Heal plantar fasciitis by taking anti-inflammatories, stretching (Chauhan suggests regularly pulling your toes up towards you for a few seconds after a workout) and massaging your feet to help boost circulation. It's important to visit a podiatrist at the first sign of pain, though, to rule out something more serious. Your doctor might suggest a pair of custom orthotics.

Flat Feet, Pronation and High Arches

■ The type of shoes you wear can make imperfections in your feet worse. "High-arched feet are prone to tendinitis and hammertoes," Chauhan explains. "Flat feet [when your arch is flat on the floor] or pronation [when the foot falls inward] can cause knee and hip pain, too."

FIX IT: Ask your podiatrist to give you a gait analysis – correcting the way you walk and stand can help knee pain – as well as advice on orthotics. Also, strengthening your feet, by walking barefoot in the

grass for a few minutes each day, Harper suggests, can help reduce the need for additional support. Harper also recommends wearing a level shoe, which, because the heel isn't elevated, allows for a more natural stride when walking.

Corns, Callouses and Bunions

■ Corns and callouses are essentially a skin buildup, while a bunion is a bony bump on the side of the big toe, the result of the toes being pressed together. "Non-supportive or too-tight shoes are the usual culprits," Chauhan says. "If untreated, these issues can even lead to bursitis, a swelling in the joints."

FIX IT: "Chemist solutions may remove only the top layer of skin," Chauhan says, "so it's good to see a podiatrist for a real solution." Also: wear more supportive, comfier shoes.

Athlete's Foot

■ Also known as tinea, this common and contagious skin condition is often contracted in communal change rooms, swimming pools or showers when barefoot. You can also get it sharing towels. A fungal infection, it needs instant treatment, otherwise it may spread to the toenails or groin area.

FIX IT: If the foot is itchy and inflamed, try a combined approach of an anti-inflammatory and anti-fungal cream. Canesten Plus cream (canesten.com.au) contains clotrimazole and hydrocortisone. Follow it up with a treatment of Canesten's anti-fungal-only cream.

Four Steps to Healthy Feet

■ Chauhan highly recommends making an annual visit to your friendly local podiatrist. "Feet can change," she says, "so it's important to maintain them."

In the meantime, she and Harper have come up with four easy things you can do to keep you on your feet.

1) Scrunch a towel.

Place a towel on the floor and scrunch it and pull it in with your toes. "The average person has weak feet, so strengthening them for a few minutes a day while you're working or watching TV can go a long way towards stopping foot pain," Harper says.

2) Massage your feet.

"It can help relax the muscles and improve circulation," Chauhan says. Seated or standing, roll a tennis ball back and forth between the ball of your foot and your heel. You can also use a wooden roller made especially for feet.

3) Trim your toenails.

You'll not only reduce trauma and make a little extra room in your shoes, you'll also reduce the risk of nail breakage. Why is this important? "So often long nails will crack or break," Chauhan says, "which can provide a port of entry for a fungus, like athlete's foot, or a virus, like warts."

4) Walk barefoot.

Or stand barefoot on one leg. "A lot of shoes are constructed like a cast, with a big arch support pushing up into the foot," Harper says. "Going barefoot on soft surfaces for even just minutes a day can strengthen your feet and help the bones naturally realign."



Trim. Keeping your nails trimmed can prevent fungus-inviting cracks.

EAT FIT

REAL MEALS FOR REAL MEN



A cookbook, meal planner and nutrition handbook for men. What to eat to grow muscle, trim down and outperform your competition.

Elevate your game

Unleash your inner speedster with combine techniques like the ones used in the AFL.

By Bill Bradley

The AFL Draft Combine is a punishing standardised test of raw speed, strength and skills, in which an eye-popping performance means the difference between an early round contract and a spot on someone's practice squad. The brutal combine includes a standing vertical jump, 20m sprint, agility test and 3km time trial, among many other horrors. So it only makes sense that when top prospects want to boost their scores, they go to specialist trainers like NFL combine guru Nick Winkelman. Here, Nick spills his secrets on speed, explosiveness and keeping yourself healthy. You probably won't be suiting up for the Swans or Hawks anytime soon, but these tips will stand you in good stead for many years to come.

How do you actually train someone to run faster?

I'll give you the secret for anyone wanting to improve their 20m sprint: train like you're going 30m. I guarantee that eight out of every ten guys will stop driving when they get near the 20m line. So twice a week – one day working zero to 10m, one day zero to 30m – run four repetitions after a proper warm-up as hard as you can. Empty the tank on all four repetitions. You'll drop your 20m sprint by a few hundredths [of a second] in six weeks. You also need to have a level of conditioning and tolerance that allows you to complete enough faster reps whereby your actual speed improves. That's the secret. Most conventional speed training is slogged by a bunch of drills that really don't do shit.

What can regular fitness guys learn from combine training specifically?
The combine prep



shows that if you want to improve your speed, then stop spending most of your time doing three sets of ten. Or if you want to get strong, then also stop spending all your time doing three sets of ten! For those who want to try a combine-type program, remember: recovery is the key to every great program, so massage, stretch, use compression and get in the cold plunge afterwards. Add a little bit of endurance training to my drills and you'll smash an adventure race or even your indoor soccer games or just a hike with your kids.

So agility drills on top of weights and endurance. What would you recommend for regular blokes wanting to up their game?

If you're doing anything beyond linear running that requires speed and

cutting – whether it's touch footy or a Tough Mudder – I recommend the six-cone drill: set two rows of three cones 4.5m apart, where you can shuffle diagonally. Each of those increases in metabolic demand as they get longer and longer. Because the limiting factor in sports – and what often causes the most non-contact injuries – relates to multidirectional speed, we spend a lot of time on it. The six-cone drill involves frequent change of direction both laterally and diagonally, which further requires an ability to drop the hips.

Why are the hips so important?

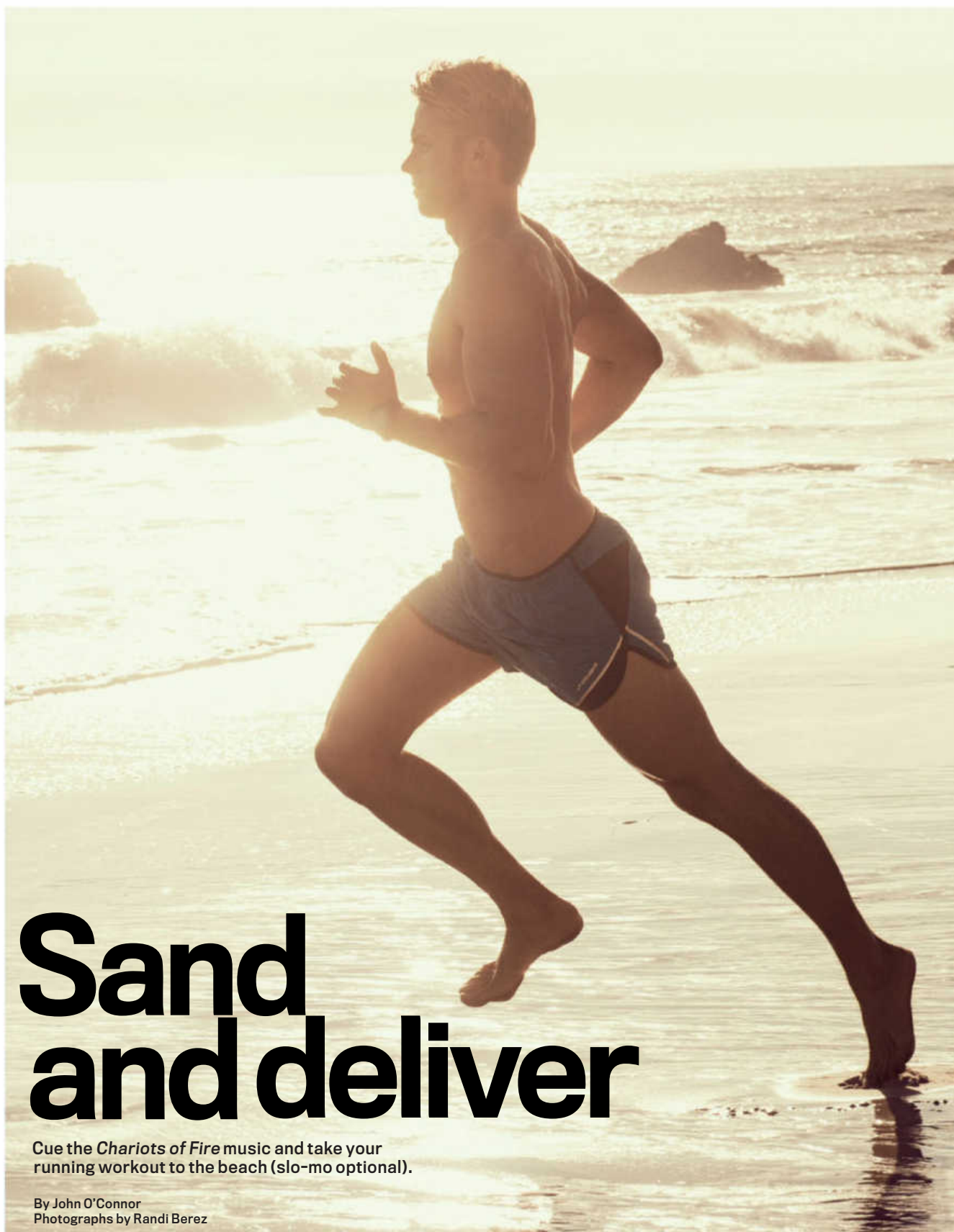
You can't change direction unless you lower your centre of mass – that is, drop your hips. Agility is all about getting low enough, fast enough. This drill is crucial to helping the body develop that rotational power and strength needed for an effective change of direction. This drill does more than you can imagine.

High score.

The vertical jump, the AFL's official test of pure power output.

LOOK THE BEST YOU CAN





Sand and deliver

Cue the *Chariots of Fire* music and take your running workout to the beach (slo-mo optional).

By John O'Connor
Photographs by Randi Berez

■ Whether you're looking to change up your regular running routine or just sneak a workout in during your next holiday, running on sand can strengthen your feet and ankles, not to mention increase overall aerobic conditioning. You expend at least 150% more energy and burn more calories running on sand than on hard surfaces – and it actually makes you faster. “Your body has to work harder to get over it,” says track and field coach Dr R Amadeus Mason. “It adds resistance and fires muscles you’re unaccustomed to using. Think of it like putting weights around your ankles, or running with a parachute on.” But beware of doing too much too fast – here’s how to ease into beach running.

Start by wearing shoes

■ You're essentially introducing an entirely new set of mechanics to your feet, ankles, calves and hips, and predisposing them to injuries like tendonitis or plantar fasciitis. So start by wearing shoes.

“It sucks, since you'll get all this sand in them,” Mason says. “But shoes take away the toe splay and stabilise the ankle.”

Add a sand session to your road run

■ Most runners, when faced with exciting new terrain, will attack it and end up hurting themselves. Think instead in terms of progression. If you've got only a week-long holiday, you'll probably want to wear shoes the entire time.

When including a beach run in your regular routine, begin with short distances, adding five minutes on wet sand to the end of a pavement run. And come off your normal road pace just a bit to give your body time to react to the new surface. Again, don't push yourself.

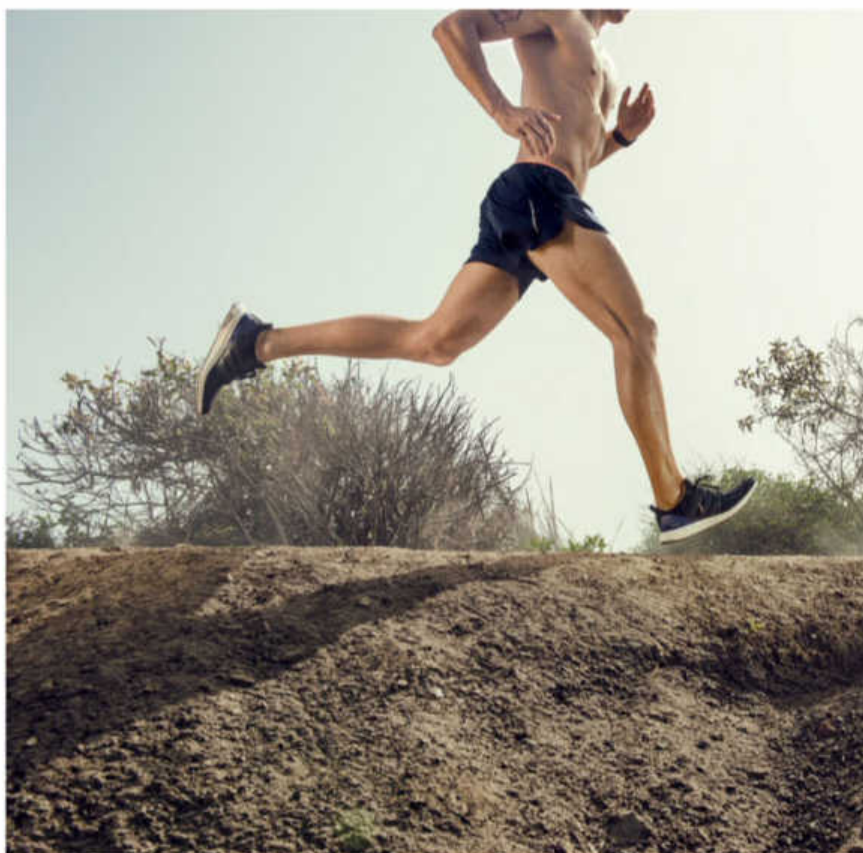
Stick to the shoreline at first

■ “You don't want to take away everything your body's used to all at once,” says Mason. Stick to the hard, packed sand down by the water, as it's a closer approximation to the running you're used to.

Gradually raise your wet-sand time from five to seven minutes, then from seven to 10, and so on over the course of several weeks.

Then go barefoot

■ After a week, ditch your shoes but stick to the wet sand. A couple of weeks later, begin transitioning to softer sand, which is where the real benefits of beach running are found. Sand grips your foot, forcing your Achilles



Sand speed drills

Hard-surface strides in wet sand

■ Start with a 10-minute warm-up at an easy pace, then accelerate for 15 to 20 seconds until you approach your top speed, then gradually decelerate. Do this four or five times, resting between sets. Cool down with an easy 10-minute jog on wet, packed sand.

Intervals

■ Warm up with a 10-minute jog in wet sand, then transition to intervals ranging anywhere from 50-100m at a pace that's slower than a sprint but slightly faster than a comfortable jog. After each interval, recover with a walk or jog for approximately half the duration of your next interval.

and calf muscles into overdrive, strengthening muscles that have all but atrophied from years of running on asphalt.

Start with short runs of five to seven minutes, then gradually up your soft-sand time to 10 to 12 minutes as your body adapts. You may still notice some mild fatigue in your Achilles, feet and calves, so keep to a reasonable pace and distance.

Adjust your pace

■ Decrease your time expectations but not intensity level. If you're shooting for an eight- or nine-minute 1.5km on a flat surface, aim for running a 10- or 12-minute 1.5km on sand. Once you get comfortable and there are no aches, you can dial in your intensity and distance on wet or dry sand.

**GET FASTER,
STRONGER, AND
USE 150% MORE
ENERGY DOING
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CHEATING DEATH

At 154kg, Mark Sosene was headed for oblivion, but a pact made with his dying grandfather motivated him to lose 62kg in just two years.



Home truths. Mark used a treadmill in his loungeroom to burn fat.

TALE OF THE SCALE MARK SOSENE

AGE: 37
LIVES: MELBOURNE
HEIGHT: 181CM
WAS: 154KG
LOST: 62KG
NOW: 99KG (ADDED 7KG MUSCLE)



what you eat and plan things better."

First up, Mark made little changes: substituting Coke Zero for regular Coke and virgin olive oil for cooking oil, and eating more fruit and vegetables. He also bought a treadmill which he placed in the loungeroom so he couldn't avoid it and stuck on a picture of his grandfather for inspiration. "In the beginning I was puffed after five minutes, but each day I would try to improve, even if it was just adding a level to the incline."

He also utilised the My Fitness Pal app, which counts calories and suggests meals to help you hit daily targets. The results were phenomenal – in the first year Mark burnt off 30kg, but at around 120kg he began to plateau. He then decided to try intermittent fasting, only eating between 12 and 4pm every day, the theory being that the body burns fat quicker in the fasted state because insulin levels are low. "I normally don't like eating breakfast anyway, so it was easier for me," he says. "But obviously in the hours I did eat I still kept within my calorie range."

"I think if you're not making any progress, up the ante and try something different."

Last year, Mark was down to 92kg, a staggering drop of 62kg in a little over two years – but he wasn't finished: "I didn't have any muscle, I wanted to get stronger." He hit the gym, working out in a 70/30 weights to cardio ratio. He also increased protein intake, including shakes, putting on 7kg of lean muscle in the past six months.

Mark now sleeps well and has low blood pressure; a far cry from the bloated, unhealthy dude he was two years ago. His trim body has had other good flow-on effects: he feels more confident and happier than ever. "You need to find your trigger – the thing that motivates you," he says. "Otherwise you won't follow through with any kind of change. Losing weight is not going to be a quick fix, just focus on taking small steps." ■

When his grandfather Daniel passed away a few years ago, Mark was in bad shape. Obese at 154kg, he was heading the same way as Daniel, who suffered from type 2 diabetes and was similarly overweight. Before Daniel died, Mark made a decision to change his life. "I promised him that I would lose the fat so I wouldn't end up dying young," Mark says.

At the time, Mark had hypertension and sleep apnoea, as the effects of years of gobbling junk food eroded his health. He'd always been the "fat kid" at school in Wellington, New Zealand, but taking up basketball and indoor netball in adolescence helped him maintain a more athletic physique. The trouble was, his eating habits were out of kilter. His parents' business meant they were on the road, so they didn't have time to prepare meals, and junk food became a dinner-time staple at Mark's home.

"WHEN YOU LIVE BY YOURSELF YOU CAN CONTROL WHAT YOU EAT AND PLAN THINGS BETTER."

In his 20s, Mark's poor diet was compounded by a job as a database designer, which he worked late nights and on weekends when the only food available was crappy takeaway. But like a lot of bigger guys, he didn't realise he was a ticking time bomb. "I didn't even notice I was that big – I felt happy, and my friends and family never said anything. It's only when I tried on clothes that I knew something was wrong."

That's when he decided to act on the pact he made with his grandfather. He did what is known as a "geographical", moving to Melbourne to be away from friends and family and the influences that led to his obesity. Mark says it was critical to shedding the kilos later on: "When you're by yourself you can control

If you've a story like Mark's you'd like to share, send an email to ashley@mensfitnessmagazine.com.au with clear before and after photos (photos must be at least 1MB each).

HOW WELL DO YOU SCRUB UP?

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Overhaul your habits

Creating new habits – or replacing bad habits with good ones – can be a lot easier if you know a few tricks.

■ Last year on his blog, Jay Z announced he and Beyoncé were going on a 22-day vegan-only diet, writing, “Psychologists have said it takes 21 days to make or break a habit. On the 22nd day, you’ve found the way.” Nice rhyme – but not necessarily true. In fact, much of what we think we know about habits can be downright counterproductive. It can take months, even years, to build healthy habits, whether you want to quit smoking, start eating better or just go to the gym more regularly. Here, the best ways to create good habits that will last a lifetime.

1. Give yourself at least 66 days to make a habit stick

That’s right, it can actually take two months or more to create a solid habit, according to a groundbreaking-but-overlooked University College London study that resulted in the eye-opening papers “How Are Habits Formed” and “Making Health Habitual”.

So where did the “21 days” come from? “This myth appears to have originated from anecdotal evidence of patients who had received plastic surgery treatment and typically adjusted psychologically to their new appearance within 21 days,” study head Dr Phillipa Lally writes.

Hardly the template to follow to hit the gym more or drop a pack-a-day habit.

In the UK study, however, 96 subjects chose an eating, drinking or activity behaviour to carry out daily in the same context (like right after breakfast) and kept a log. When they exhibited the behaviour automatically, without thinking, 95% of the time, bingo – they had a new habit.

Here’s the kicker: study-wide, the time subjects needed to reach the “automatic” stage ranged from 18 to 254 (!) days, with the average being 66.

So don’t set yourself up for failure by expecting to change your life in three weeks – it simply doesn’t work that way.



2. Understand how a habit works before you try to change it

Perhaps the best treatise on habit building in recent years is the best seller *The Power of Habit*, by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Charles Duhigg. He created a system he calls “the loop”, which breaks habits into three actions: a cue (the trigger that reminds you to perform a habit), a routine (the action you do automatically) and a reward (the payoff you feel you get).

Say you’re trying to make a habit of going to the gym in the morning. First, you need a cue: it could be as simple as laying your clothes out at night so you see them first thing; leaving your gym bag by the door so you trip on it as you leave; or setting the coffee-maker to brew automatically so there’s caffeine to get you going.

Next comes the routine: you go and work out at the gym. This is the part that will, with some practice, become automatic once you’ve repeated it so many times it’s an ingrained part of your behaviour.

Finally, you need a reward to congratulate yourself for following through. It may sound excessive, but it’s key to the process. After all, how many things in life would you do willingly, over and over, if you never got anything back? (Marriage doesn’t count.) So buy a fancy latte on your way to work or play your most upbeat song – anything to help rewire your brain to feel better about the habit and *want to repeat it*.

Now, to *change* an old habit or break one like smoking, you’ll need to slightly modify the approach, Duhigg writes.

“To change a habit, you must keep the old cue and deliver the old reward but insert a new routine.” For example, if every time you exit a staff meeting (the cue) you smoke (the routine) to relieve your stress (the reward), you won’t be able to quit until you’ve found a new reward that follows that cue (the meeting) and provides that payoff (stress relief). Try various rewards until you find one that works for you – maybe a short walk outside, a YouTube break or your favourite snack.

Of course, tough habits like smoking rely on multiple cues and rewards all day long, so try to figure *each one* out – not easy, but definitely worth the trouble.

3. Consider variety your enemy

“Changing it up” may be a good way to avoid boredom in the bedroom, but it’s the enemy of efficient habit creation.

“Repeating a single action (for example, eating a banana) in a consistent context (with cereal at breakfast) is very different from the typical advice given to people trying to take up new behaviours, which often emphasises variation to maintain interest (like trying different fruits with or between different meals),” Lally writes in her paper.

Aiming for variety takes extra effort and motivation, she says, which makes creating “automatic” habits even harder. Pick one cue, behaviour and reward and stick with them until the habit’s ironclad.

4. Don’t quit if you miss a day – it won’t matter in the long run

In the London study, researchers logged when a subject “missed an opportunity” (didn’t perform a habit after having done it three days in a row), then calculated how often those screw-ups caused subjects to fall completely off the wagon.

Answer: almost never.

“Missing one opportunity... did not materially affect the habit-formation process,” the study found. “There were no longer-term costs associated with a single omission.” So don’t fret about occasional bumbles – your habit building can still proceed without a hitch.

5. Use mental rehearsals to build your “habit muscle”

In *Rewire: Change Your Brain to Break Bad Habits*, Dr Richard O’Connor cites a US Harvard study in which subjects practised a one-handed piano exercise two hours a day for five days. Afterwards, it was found, the brain area that controls the fingers was enlarged and enriched.

No big deal, right?

Then researchers asked one group to keep practising for a month, another to stop practising and a third to only *mentally* practice. At the end, the earlier brain changes had disintegrated in the non-practising group, improved in the practising group – and improved, *to almost the same degree*, in the group that only mentally practised.

If you’re building a habit, mental rehearsals and internal pep talks could actually improve your chances. Like the piano players, envision yourself performing your habit – for example, eating a healthy dinner instead of a takeaway pizza, and that area of your brain will grow stronger.

6. Don’t underestimate the undertow that can drag you down

“Undertow” or “the seemingly mysterious power that seems to wreck our attempts to escape self-destructive behaviour just when we start to feel safe” is the unconscious force that can derail good habits, says O’Connor in *Rewire*.

But there are ways to gain the upper hand. Admitting that we’re powerless over self-destructive behaviour and that the “undertow” is a natural part of building better habits are key. “Accept that you have to make big changes in how your mind works in order to stop your self-destructive behaviour,” he writes.

One big help: mindfulness. Yes, it borders on cliché lately, but being able to stay self-aware moment by moment can be a boon to habit building.

7. Let technology feed your habit

Sticking with a habit for months on end is pretty tough, but everyday gadgets can lighten the load.

One great app is HabitBull for Android. It doesn’t just remind you to do a task – with funny messages, if you choose – it also creates a “habit streak” (“Ten days straight without a doughnut, *whoooooeee!*”) you won’t want to break.

On iOS, the Way of Life app tracks habits in day-to-day charts, so it’s easy to visualise both the good and the bad.

Finally, let Andrew Shamel’s Mindful app remind you several times a day to take a mindfulness break, like a brief meditation, a moment of reflection or deep breathing. Sounds a bit hippy-ish, but they’re great habit reinforcers.

Or just tell Siri, “Set a reminder at 4pm to eat some nuts,” or use GPS to alert you the next time you pass the gym. Habit building’s hard enough, so why not use all the help you can get? ■

Mario Armstrong is a digital lifestyle expert.

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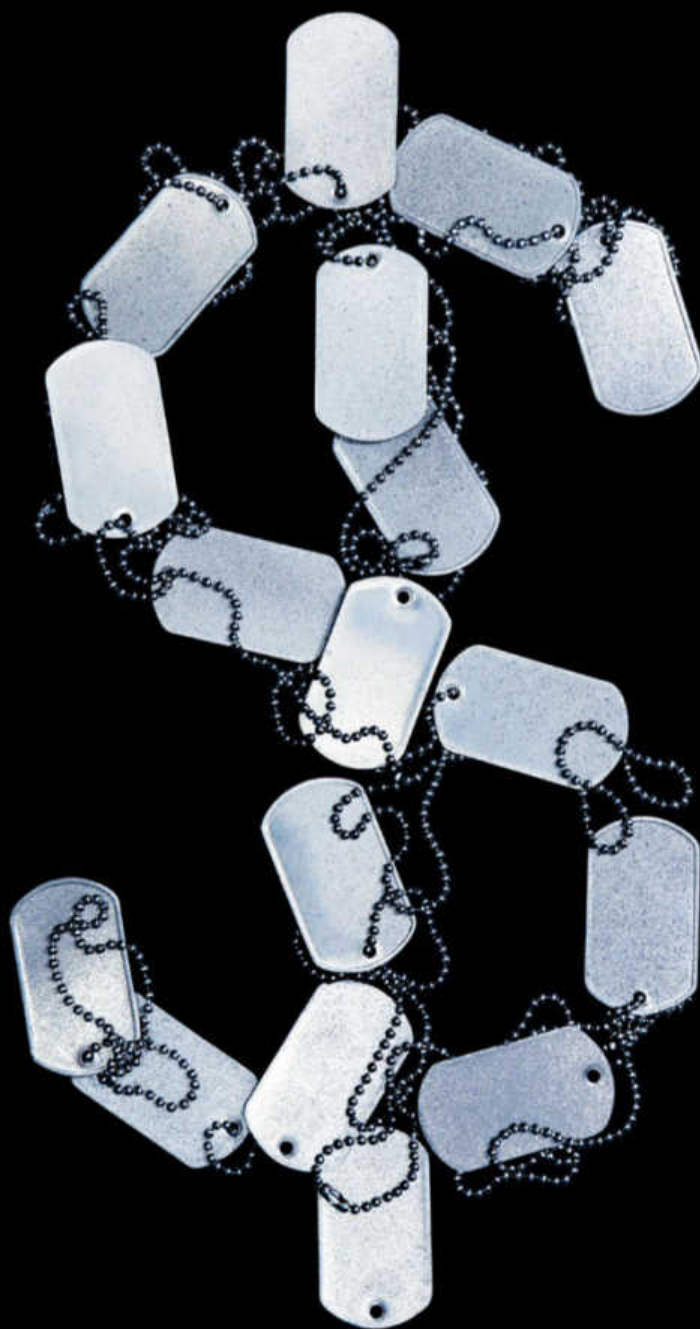
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The Navy SEAL's guide to success

What a highly decorated, financially successful, wildly knowledgeable former elite soldier can teach you about how to get ahead.

I **IF ERIC GREITENS WERE** your commanding officer, you'd have to listen to him – the military is tough like that. Of course, he's not your CO, but you should listen to him anyhow because he's a worthy superior in every way. A former US Navy SEAL and commander of an al Qaeda-targeting cell, he's also a boxing champion, a taekwondo second dan and a sub-three-hour marathoner who bench-presses 127.5kg. That's not all. Greitens is also a Rhodes scholar. And, most obnoxiously, he's not obnoxious. In fact, when he returned from Iraq with a Purple Heart, he used his combat pay to found a charity, The Mission Continues, which helps veterans thrive in their post-service lives. So it's no surprise that a guy who knows his bench max down to the half kilo doesn't get

through life just by winging it. Greitens has developed systems and techniques to help him achieve his goals, many of which he outlines in his new book *Resilience: Hard-Won Wisdom for Living a Better Life*. Here are his essential lessons for achieving financial freedom and professional success.

Create your own movie poster

All of us have ideas of what we want our lives to look like, from getting more exercise to getting the girl to getting the promotion. But to fulfil those desires, Greitens says, you need more precision.

First, put your goals on paper. Yes, it sounds a bit dorky. But experts have found that the mere act of writing down goals increases your chances of achieving them.

Then Greitens takes it a step further. “Visualise the moment of achievement,” he says. “Show me what the movie poster looks like.” Once, when a veteran was struggling to transition to the civilian world, Greitens helped him create this mental snapshot: “He said, ‘I’ve just walked across the stage, I’ve just got my degree, I turn and see my family smiling at me, and I’ve got a job lined up,’” he recalls. You can guess what that soldier did after that.

By carrying a picture in your head, “you’re not just ‘working toward’ these goals,” he says. “The picture gives you something to actually ‘live toward’.”

Finally, share your goals. By letting your mates know that, say, you’re focused on paying off your student loan by 2017, they’ll understand when you skip the Bali trip this year.

Solve the problem before it becomes one

Greitens reached back more than 2,000 years to the Greek Stoics for a life hack that helped him get through SEAL training, and it can help you overcome adversity, get to the office early and avoid stupid financial moves.

As we all do, the Stoics thought about things that could go wrong. But instead of worrying, Greitens says, they mentally rehearsed their responses. They even gave the process an awesome name: “Premeditation of Evils”.

One of the tests for SEAL hopefuls requires them to jump in the water, do a front flip while submerged, then, without taking a breath, swim

underwater the full length of the pool and back. So Greitens mentally practised for the moment when he was 25m in, out of breath and couldn’t even see the finish line. “If the first time you do it is during the test, you’re going to bolt for the surface,” he explains. Instead, he imagined telling himself to put his hands out in front, relax, then pull his hands back. “If you’ve thought about it over and over again, when that moment comes, you’ll know how to react.”

The technique is so useful because we tend to be guided by our emotions, which often push us in the wrong direction. “So when the alarm goes off at 4am,” Greitens says, “your feelings say snooze. And if that’s all there is to guide you, you’ll keep hitting snooze.” Instead, mentally rehearse what you’ll do. Get up and into the shower, enjoy the hot water, have enough time to get ready before arriving at the office on time.

It works with money, too. One of the hallmarks of great investors is that they do the opposite of what their emotions urge them to do. So mentally rehearse exactly what you’re going to do with your savings when the next market crash comes (and it will). Though every bone in your body will want to sell, picture yourself logging into your account and investing a small amount in the market. And if it keeps falling, buying a little bit more. Then imagine that movie-poster moment, in the next bull market, when your friends say how they wish they’d bought at the bottom, and you say, “I did.”

Remember: it’s not about you

Greitens says the toughest time in his entire SEAL-training Hell Week wasn’t when he was carrying a soldier on his back on a 16km run or struggling underwater with his hands and feet tied. It came when the men were finally allowed a few desperately needed hours in their cots, but he couldn’t fall asleep. “I started to feel all this self-pity and fear. That was my hardest moment,” he says.

At times we all feel this way. Occasionally, it’s even justified – life isn’t always fair. But unlike a Test cricket captain, you can’t challenge a decision; there’s no-one to overturn the ruling on the field. So Greitens came to a realisation – one that can help make you a better employee, a better husband, a better father.

“I said to myself, ‘It’s not about me. This

“THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT MYSELF, THE WEAKER I GOT. THE MORE I RECOGNISED I WAS SERVING A PURPOSE LARGER THAN MYSELF, THE STRONGER I GOT.”

test is about my ability to be of service to the people who are asleep in this tent right now,” he recalls. He stopped focusing on himself and his fear and self-pity washed away. And he fell asleep. “The more I thought about myself, the weaker I got. The more I recognised that I was serving a purpose larger than myself, the stronger and tougher I got.”

Be a good soldier

If you start saluting your boss every morning in the office, you’ll look like a jackass. But there is one military procedure I sometimes wish my direct reports would follow, and Greitens concurs. It’s called “commander intent”.

After receiving an order from a superior, a lower-ranking officer will repeat it: “You told me to do X because we want to achieve A, B and C,” Greitens explains. In civilian terms, it means making it clear you understand what your boss wants to accomplish. “Not just what he’s asked you to do,” he says, “but his larger goals, for the week, the month, the year. What are the larger goals the company is pursuing?” Every day when you get to the office, you want to be able to act as if you’re an owner of the company.

Now, in the real world, where the boss is more like David Brent than Agent Coulson, your boss either won’t tell you what he wants or he’ll make a very specific demand today, then contradict himself tomorrow. Tempted to give up? Close your eyes and picture the movie poster: you, sitting in your boss’s chair, doing a better job. Then premeditate the evils conversation. Greitens provides the script: “I really want to make sure I’m doing this job in a way that’s going to exceed your expectations,” Greitens suggests. “I’d be grateful if you’d help me understand this in a way that I can achieve excellence.”

Got it? Dismissed. ■

Jack Otter is the author of Worth It...Not Worth It? Simple & Profitable Answers to Life’s Tough Financial Questions.

La Dolce Vita

Cover guy Mike Dolce is a nutritional advisor to world champion MMA fighters. They use him because he can slash bodyweight and ramp up performance. He can help you, too.

BY DALE TAYLOR



"I was once 127kg – I'm now 89kg, with only 5% bodyfat. How? By figuring out the most effective exercise and dietary principles."



IF THERE'S ONE GUY ON THE PLANET WHO CAN CLAIM TO BE THE BEST AT getting your bodyfat and weight down to a specific number within a set time frame while still maintaining weapons-grade sports performance, it's American Mike Dolce.

Recently in Australia to dispense nutritional information to participants in the *Wimp 2 Warrior* series, he regularly ensures that world champion mixed martial artists (MMA) have their diets absolutely on point before a bout so they can brawl at their best to bring home the silverware. However, it wasn't always that way. There was a time when the 39-year-old was an overweight municipal tax assessor. "I was once 127kg – I'm now 89kg, with only 5% bodyfat," says Dolce, while a wry smile begins to creep across his face. "I was even down to 77 kilos when I was fighting. How? By figuring out the most effective exercise and dietary principles." Just how he got these dialled in is a tale worth telling.

Originally from New Jersey, Dolce's professional peers were all grossly overweight and sported blood pressures that

Recovery max

Whether you're injured or have pushed through a gruelling training session, your body needs the same nutrients to recover. "After a workout, you should always refuel with a whey protein isolate shake that's been cold processed, as this makes sure it holds the maximum amount of nutrients," Dolce explains. "If you're training, you can even drink it 15 minutes before the end of your session. However, before you take supplements you need to make sure your diet is on point with whole foods. One food that works well to fight inflammation from training is turmeric." A tasty way to recover fully.



resembled a cricket score. Seeing this, he quit his six-figure career to work in an MMA gym doing work that coughed up a measly \$8 per hour because he knew that's where his true passion lay. He says that at the time everyone told him he was nine kinds of crazy, yet he trusted in himself and in the long term it paid off big time, with the best-selling *The Dolce Diet* book series and a thriving nutrition business. However, back then the MMA wasn't nearly as big as it is now and he cut his teeth developing nutrition plans for MMA fighters who were previously considered lost causes because they could never make weight.

While working with these elite fighters, he also helped normal people shape up using his Dolce Diet system, but that wasn't quite paying the bills, so to keep afloat he decided to fight. He joined the cast of *The Ultimate Fighter* season seven and fought several professional bouts (four wins, nine losses). Though he had the ability, his true calling was to help people look and feel their best. So after retiring from the octagon, he continued to work with the elite fighters because he realised that most nutrition coaches were still using archaic Rocky-style methods to get their athletes to make weight. These sportsmen stopped eating and drinking and were running laps in hot rooms, which made them weak and unhealthy.



Octagon warrior:
Mike battles
Antonio McKee in
Washington in 2007.

This is how Dolce's system differs from most other weight-cutting options – his athletes are healthy, strong and in peak condition. His dietary philosophy is smart but simple: eat real food; that is, foods that are raised and harvested as close to their natural state as possible, paired with an intelligent exercise regime focusing on functional movement.

Fortunately, it didn't take long for the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) to notice the common thread between the fighters who were consistently making weight and winning fights – they'd all worked with two-time MMA trainer of the year Mike Dolce. His dietary principles had become the dividing line between successes and outright failures, so the UFC endorsed his program and worked with him to develop a bodyweight workout routine that sits alongside his dietary system. "We constantly force the body to adapt to new stimuli while training so the body can move forward," explains Dolce. "Meanwhile, we're building strength, burning bodyfat and increasing flexibility and endurance." Fortunately, you don't have to be willing to take a fist to the face to benefit from his knowledge. All you need to do is stick to his dietary tactics and you will be happier and healthier inside and out.

Find out more about Mike and his methods at thedolcediet.com.

Build an iron chest like Dolce's

"Most guys equate huge chests with a big barbell bench press," Dolce says, "but the anatomy of the pectoral muscle is not designed for that motion, which mainly uses the anterior deltoid and triceps."

■ **CABLE CROSSOVERS**
2 sets x 25 reps
"Consider this a warm-up, which will prime the pec muscles to activate at a higher level later on."

■ **INCLINE DUMBBELL CHEST PRESS**
1 set x 15 reps / 2 sets x 12 reps / 1 set x 6 reps
"Focus on perfect form here to really grow that muscle. Do not let your elbows flair wide; instead let them drop so they're in line with your lower chest."

■ **FLAT BENCH DUMBBELL PRESS**
3 sets x 12 reps
"Keep elbows tucked in at approximately a 45° angle, think about squeezing your chest on each rep."

■ **DIP**
3 sets x 12 reps
"Start with just your bodyweight. If you can do 12 reps with perfect form, add some weight, if not, keep grinding."

■ **PUSHUPS**
2 sets to failure
"Go for broke! Perfect form, similar to your flat dumbbell press, pump out the reps until you fall flat on your face."

Dolce's food rules

CUT FOR COMBAT

You'll get the best results from contact sports if you get your head in attack mode and your diet can help foster this spark. "Foods that increase your testosterone are ideal fare for giving you that aggressive edge," explains Dolce. "There are three high-value proteins that really stand out above the others for achieving this."

- Whole eggs
- Grass-fed beef
- Wild-caught fish

FOCUS FUEL

Whether you want to last five rounds in an octagon or just become the beast in your Sunday five-a-side match, you need to have energy that lasts. "For reliable energy, you should eat 30-90 minutes before training," says Dolce. "However, you need to be in tune with your body by asking questions like what am I about to do or what have I just done and make sure you fuel accordingly." To stay focused, you should follow these golden rules, which promote health and longevity, and your sports performance will soon follow suit.

- Rule 1: Eat only whole foods.
- Rule 2: Eat every 2-4 hours.
- Rule 3: Eat until you're satisfied – not full.
- Rule 4: Drink more water.
- Rule 5: Stay accountable. Plenty of reasons to blow off your diet but one to stick to it.



Fighting-fit meals Dolce's favourite get-lean nosh.



BREAKFAST: BREAKFAST BOWL

Ingredients

½ cup buckwheat or oats
¼ cup blueberries
¼ cup strawberries
¼ cup raisins
½ sliced banana
1 tbsp almond butter
1 tbsp ground flaxseed
Pinch of cinnamon
1-cup water

Make it

Bring the water to the boil then add the rest of the ingredients and turn down the heat to let it simmer. Cover with almond milk to thin it out. Serves 1-2.

LUNCH: FIGHTER FAJITAS

Ingredients

225g skinless, boneless chicken breasts, diced
225g black beans
1 tsp chilli powder
½ tsp ground cumin
Sprinkle of sea salt and pepper
4-6 whole-wheat, gluten-free tortillas

Toppings

1 avocado, mashed
1 tomato, chopped
¼ head lettuce
Shredded cheddar cheese

Make it

Heat your oven to 180 degrees. Coat a pan with grape seed oil then set to a medium heat. Combine the spices in a bowl and coat the chicken with them. Cook the chicken in the pan for 10 minutes, heat the tortillas in the oven for 2 minutes, then stuff with the toppings and chicken. Serves 2-4.

DINNER: CHAMPION CHILLI

Ingredients

225g ground organic turkey
2 cans diced tomatoes
1 can kidney beans
1 red capsicum, diced
1 green capsicum, diced
1 sweet onion, diced
4 cloves garlic, chopped
Chilli powder and sea salt to taste

Make it

Put the tomatoes and beans in a large pot and place on a low heat. Brown meat in a different pan and add to tomato pot. Sauté the capsicum, onion and garlic in grape seed oil then add to the tomato pot. Add the spices and sprinkle with cheese if you like.

MID-MEAL SNACKS

- Celery with peanut butter
- Honey on wholegrain bread
- Oranges and sliced avocado
- Dates and pecan nuts
- Apple slices and almond butter

“Eat a nutrient-rich meal before you go out so you’re not eating for hunger and you’ll make healthier decisions when ordering.”

Eating out

It's unfair to assume that because you're eating to get lean you need to be handcuffed to your own kitchen. Dolce outlines these key guidelines for eating out.

■ Eat a nutrient-rich meal before you go so you're not eating for hunger and you'll make healthier decisions when ordering.

■ Take a healthy trail mix snack with plenty of nuts with you everywhere and snack on it before meals.

■ Always opt for lean proteins and green veges – and ask the waiter to hold the sauce. ■



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MAKE A PLAN

● “Help your partner set goals, like deadlifting her own bodyweight or doing her first pullup,” says personal trainer Jessica Wolny. “And let her know that by hitting them, she’ll improve her body composition. Also, tell her that you’re impressed when she does what she sets out to do.”

Focus on body fat percentage, not total weight loss, otherwise she may be disheartened when an increase in muscle makes the scale go the wrong way. Get her a notebook or app to track progress, and if she hits a milestone in the gym without you, show enthusiasm, ask questions and relive the experience. According to a study in the *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, couples that celebrated their successes according to those three principles reported feeling happier and less stressed.



The studies are unanimous: exercising with a partner boosts motivation *and* performance, increases your chances of sticking to new workout regimes and helps you form positive habits. But there's more: by hitting the gym (or the road) together, you'll also prime your relationship for success... if you do it right. Here's how to maximise your gains *and* your game.

your performance both in your relationship and in the gym – and it's not just about the body.

TALK SCIENCE

● Is she worried about getting too big? "Remind her that muscle distribution is different for men and women, so it's difficult for women to get excessively bulky upper bodies," says Wolny. "And mention that apart from female bodybuilders taking, ah, 'specialist supplements', women don't have the testosterone to get huge."

If she's still worried, stick to low-rep workouts: studies show that the one-to-three rep range is ideal for adding strength without hypertrophy, so pink dumbbells are out and big plates are in. And if all else fails, go for the nuclear option. "Remind her how many guys in the gym are trying to get huge," suggests Wolny. "And then point out how few of them are actually managing it." Ouch.

“Strength is no longer a tough sell – strong is the new skinny.”

AIM FOR STRENGTH

● It isn't the tough sell it was a few years ago – strong is the new skinny. “I've seen a huge shift where women now associate weights with strong women who can still slip into that little black dress and feel confident not only in how they train but in how they carry themselves outside the gym,” says trainer Kerry Tanner. Introduce her to big, basic moves such as the squat and deadlift – as well as the secret weapon for impressive glutes, the barbell hip thruster: she lies with her shoulders on a bench and a barbell across her hips and bridges up.

BE A CHEERLEADER

● Because not everyone's motivated by piling on more plates. “A lot of women are driven by the feeling of being strong in the mind and body, not just looking pretty in front of the mirror,” says Tanner. “Avoid physical comparisons to other ladies, even if you're framing them in a positive way. But do encourage your partner to watch what other women are doing in the gym – women are often more motivated by watching other women than men. And remember to praise her when she does well.”

According to psychologist and marriage expert John Gottman, couples who stay together for the long term have five positive interactions for every single negative one. So keep it positive.

FOCUS ON FORM

● “For a lot of ladies, the feeling of owning their mind and body as they walk into the free weights area – what used to be the ‘male’ zone – is like nothing else,” says Tanner. “It's about breaking boundaries, discovering new levels of mental strength, building courage and self-esteem.”


Knowing what to do helps, so go over the finer points of form on basic moves including the squat, deadlift and bench press. When one of you is having a bit of a bad day in the gym – carb crash, anyone? – try to use humour to defuse the situation. And never roll your eyes – studies suggest that's a common relationship-breaker.





THINK NEGATIVES

● We know we just said keep it positive... but this is different. "Because of their muscle distribution, a lot of women will have trouble with even unweighted pushups and pullups," says Wolny. "Instead of bands or kneeling pushups, get her to use 'negatives'. For example, jump to the top of a pullup and lower slowly. Aim to do five lowering for three seconds, then build up the time – once she can manage a ten-second eccentric, a strict pullup isn't far away."

A woman in a white sports bra and a man in black shorts are performing pull-ups on a horizontal bar in a gym. The woman is in the foreground, looking towards the camera with a focused expression. The man is in the background, also looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

"It's about breaking boundaries, building courage and self-esteem."

...AND DITCH THE ELLIPTICAL

Her new rules for cardio? Short and horrible. "Long periods on the treadmill or Stairmaster will increase levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which can lead to excess stored belly fat," says Wolny. "Keep it quick and hard. Grab a couple of exercise bikes together and go for 15 seconds of all-out sprinting followed by 45 seconds of active recovery, repeated ten times. You'll both burn fat all day." The alternative is to go for a long walk – it'll burn calories without building stress and let you enjoy each other's company. ■

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fTour de force

The Tour de France's best-ever sprinter **Mark Cavendish** reveals what it takes to conquer valleys and mountains, and smash the pain barrier.

Mark Cavendish does not have time for stupid questions. This is a man, after all, who puts in more hours on the saddle every week than most people spend at their desk, and who's been living the grind of a full-time professional cyclist since he was in his teens. Like most pros, he typically races for about 100 days out of every year, which means months of travelling and sleeping in hotel rooms, seeing his wife and children whenever he can. On top of all that, there are gym hours, team commitments, sponsor duties and endless media obligations – and so, when he gives a one-word answer to a poorly thought-out question, or snaps at a journalist who hasn't done their basic research, it's difficult to blame him.

Today, the man known as the “Manx Missile” [Cavendish hails from the Isle of Man near Britain where locals are referred to as Manxmen] is in a good mood. Despite coming up a few metres short in the second sprint finish of the 2015 Tour – he lost to his German rival André Greipel – he's in shape and on weight, with a lean upper body on top of sprinter's legs that need their own tailor. And it's not just about the bike.

“I've got a multigym in the house these days,” says Cavendish. “A lot of riders use an Olympic rack, but I didn't really want one of those – I can do anything I want with the multigym. I never used to do anything in the gym, but now I've got a treadmill, too... when

I get a chance to rest, it's really about working the muscles you don't use on the bike, making sure they're functioning properly.”

Speed feed

After giving up sugar during the 2012 season, he still cuts back occasionally to hit his ideal size. “The weight comes off really quickly. It's hard to do, and then when I do go back on it I just swell up in a day. You can't just say, ‘I'm going to stop eating sugar’ – I had it managed by a dietitian. But it works, yeah.”

And while other teams are rediscovering the benefits of “natural” fuelling with food rather than energy gels, Cavendish has been doing it for years. “My dietitian was the first one to do it, and now my team [Etixx-Quick Step] does it all the time. The old-school guys used to eat

frangipane – now it's rice cakes every day.” He still uses cycling nutritionist Nigel Mitchell's recipe for pistachio cake (see box, page 60) rather than drinking protein shakes.

He's also, he says, using kettlebells, doing core work, even stretching – not yoga or Pilates or anything fancy, he stresses, just “basic” stretches. “I'm getting older, you know. My body doesn't adapt easily any more. I've been doing it for over ten years now and I've been in the same position on a bike now for hundreds of thousands of kilometres. I'm finally feeling it nowadays. It's easy to get a little bit uncomfortable on the bike. The workouts are nothing major, just, I don't know – a prevention thing.”



French magazine
L'Equipe called
Cavendish the
greatest sprinter
of all time.

Part of this, of course, is down to what happened in last year's Tour. He made no secret of the fact that it was his main goal for the season, cutting back his race program to arrive rested. But the other race leaders weren't prepared to concede a stage win that easily and German sprinter Marcel Kittel was helped to the front by his own teammates, forcing Cavendish to look for what he later called "a gap that wasn't there". A multi-bike pile-up and separated shoulder later, Cavendish was out of the stage and the rest of the Tour, the first time he'd missed it since turning pro in 2007. He still won 11 races over the course of the year, but (by his own high standards) 2014 was one of his less successful seasons. This year, he's been back to his brilliant best: winning two stages of the Dubai Tour, plus Kuurne-Brussels-Kuurne, three stages of the Tour of Turkey and four stages of the Tour of California.

Power cycle

It's worth remembering that in 2012 French sports magazine *L'Equipe* called him the greatest sprinter of all time. He's got 25 stage wins on the Tour, putting him in third place for the all-time total behind Tour legends Eddy Merckx and Bernard Hinault, and in first place for mass-start victories. He's got the endurance to stay in the mix through a 100km/h stage, the tactical acumen to find a line through the pack in the final kilometre and the raw power to sprint the last 200 metres at 70km/h. He's also a cyclist's cyclist, with skills that go way beyond calculating wattages – Google "Mark Cavendish leap" to see him bunny-hopping over a roundabout as he weaves through the team cars in furious pursuit of André Greipel after a 2013 Tour crash.

It's boy's own stuff, learned during his teenage years of racing with coach Rod Ellingworth. "He was superb," Cavendish says. "We had this old-school mentality. You couldn't spend your whole day in labs – you had to learn to race, and you had to learn to crash."

Set in stone

This mentality is what makes Cavendish such an exciting racer: he'd rather push for the win than settle for less, even if it means personal risk. It's why he doesn't fear the more dangerous sections of the Tour or the dodgy weather conditions that can prevail and unnerve lesser competitors. "That's cycling, I guess. You can't predict the weather," he shrugs. "It's a man on a bike – that's what it's about. I like racing on cobbles, I'm good at it, and I have the best team in the world for the cobbled races – you know, real racing. I think they're the only pure tactical form of cycling left. Even in mountains now, everyone looks at the power meters. It's no longer racing, it's not tactics – it's pretty much just a time trial where everyone starts together and they know what they can do the whole way up, which in my opinion makes it a pretty boring race."

It's an interesting point: there have been, arguably, fewer heroics on recent Tours than in the past, with teams less willing to attack or



Missile fuel Cavendish keeps it simple on the road and in the kitchen. Here's your new nutrition cycle.

Fuel with nuts

Energy gels? Unnecessary. Nutritionist Nigel Mitchell's pistachio rice cakes are all you need for longer efforts. Cook a batch of risotto rice, then mix in vanilla extract, honey, low-fat cream cheese and chopped pistachios. Squash the whole lot into a clingfilm-lined baking tray, cool overnight and chop into squares for instant energy.

Cut down on sugar

For the 2012 Olympics, Cavendish shed 4kg in months with little else. Eliminate one source a week – soft drinks first, say, then biscuits and chocolate bars. You'll avoid the worst cravings and cut down on fat-storing insulin spikes.

Hydrate properly

If you aren't doing a 40km/h climb up Mont Ventoux, you might not need a 4,000-calorie drink. Make your own low-calorie version of the hydration mix created by the nutrition pioneers at Skratch Labs by adding ½tsp of salt to two litres of water, along with a dash of lime juice. It'll keep you hydrated and lean.



“Training was old-school. You had to learn to race and to crash.”

break away. It's hard to argue with his angle that it's less exciting. So can anything be done? “I think there's a misconception by a lot of race organisers,” says Cavendish. “They think that they have to make a race harder, that they have to put more hills in. The thing is now, people don't dope any more, so people can't go on a day-long breakaway in the mountains. That means you get bigger groups. The organiser put in hills to break the groups, but the problem is nobody can go and attack so it's an even bigger group in the end. It's not necessarily how many hills or how much climbing there is, it's the position of the hills that makes a difference – and it's based on a misconception. But most organisers don't race bikes, so they don't understand.”

Giant steps

Apart from the organisers, Cavendish has had two other obstacles

to contend with: first Kittel, the muscular German who won the stage-one sprint in 2014 with Giant-Alpecin, one of the best-drilled lead-outs in the peloton, specialising in delivering the big man to the front. But he has been injury-plagued in 2015 and didn't make the Tour. The other is Greipel from the Lotto-Soudal team, who at the time of writing was blitzing all and sundry. Such rivalries are usually good for a sport's popularity, although Cavendish seems reluctant to agree – or even admit that there is a rivalry. “It's quite big news now that I'm not dominating,” he says. “People have always looked at the sprinters because sprinting has always been really exciting.”

If he's not dominating now, Cavendish has no intention of letting that situation last long. This is a man unapologetically driven by winning, who entered his first ever race on a bike with



Look, no hands!
Cavendish wins Stage 7 of
the 2015 Tour of Turkey.

“I just want to continue winning – I’m pretty greedy.”

no gears and lost, then got a proper one and won... then kept winning. He’s not one of the new breed of cyclist who work with psychologist Steve Peters, originator of the “Inner Chimp” theory [managing the part of the brain which runs on emotions and instincts so that they can be utilised as a positive force in sporting competition] – “I can understand why some people may use it, but for me it makes no difference whatsoever” – preferring, as he says in his autobiography *Boy Racer*, to “have smoke blown up my arse”. Training is what he’s about, and in preparation for this season he’s been training harder than ever, putting in more time in the saddle.

“Yeah, it does take longer to peak now,” he says. “When you’re younger it’s a matter of a few weeks for you to go from base level to top. Now it’s harder. Rest periods used to be six weeks when I was younger, after the season, now it’s like two weeks. Every two years it goes down by a week.”

Win ‘em all

Can he keep up the performances? This is one of those questions Cavendish doesn’t like: 30 is probably too young to talk about retirement. So here’s a better question: what else is there to do? “There’s not much more on the checklist,” he admits. “I just want to keep going and continue winning – I’m pretty greedy, I don’t like losing, so I just want to continue to win for as long as I can.”

And what advice would he give to anyone else who wants to get on their bike and see what they can do? This is the question where Cavendish the cyclist comes out: the guy who’s terse with unprepared journalists but always the first to praise his own teammates, unfailingly polite to other pros, quick to take responsibility when he messes up. The cyclist who loves to win, but also loves the game. “Keep doing it – just don’t give up on it. The more you do it the better you’ll get. The better you get, the more you’ll enjoy it.” He pauses. “Don’t be disheartened – just do it.” And keep doing it. Above all else, he’s a man who practises what he preaches. ■

Fast improvements

Boost your performance in the saddle with Cavendish’s tips.

Call for the bell

Cavendish uses basic kettlebell moves to build balance and stability in his core as he sprints. To do the same, do one-arm kettlebell swings – you still swing the bell between your legs, but the uneven load will mimic the “pull” you get on the handlebars during a big surge. Do two sets of 20 each side, twice a week.

Sprint to the finish

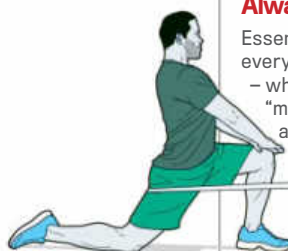
Training for a finishing sprint doesn’t have to be complicated, and Cavendish keeps it ultra-basic: go out for a one- to two-hour training ride, then get a decent rolling start and go all out for the final few seconds. “Aim for 300 metres,” says Cavendish. “I’ll usually only sprint the last 250 in a race, but if you can hold for 300 it’ll be no problem.”

Stretch your hips

Tight hip flexors are the bane of cyclists. The classic hip flexor stretch – dropping your back knee to the floor from a lunge position – works fine, but there’s an upgrade: loop a resistance band around the hamstring on your rear leg and around an anchor point.

Always train

Essential. “When I was a kid I went out every day,” says Cavendish. “In the rain, cold – whatever the conditions.” Make it into a “micro-habit” by just resolving to go for a tiny run/ride/workout. It doesn’t matter how little you do: conditioning yourself to hit the road or gym frequently and consistently is key.





Chris Thomas
Global Service Manager
Taylors Canyon, UT
Photographer: Andy Mann



Black Diamond[®]

Equipment for mountain sports

Street science

Don't let train delays and traffic dictate your journey to the office. Lace up your running shoes and take your commute into your own hands.



1 LIMBER UP

"Static stretching won't work by itself," says Dr Kelly Starrett, author of *Becoming a Supple Leopard*. "It won't address motor skills or how to get into good positions." Here's your new warm-up.

Couch Stretch Put your shin against the front of a sofa, knee on the floor and plant your other foot. Drive your hips towards the floor and hold for 30 seconds each side. This helps with hip and knee mobility.

Calf Smash Sit on the floor with something cylindrical – a foam roller is ideal – under your calves. Raise yourself on your hands and roll back and forth ten times. This reduces stress on the Achilles tendon and knee.

2 EAT AND RUN

Fuel your run (and the rest of your day) properly by eating the right breakfast. Personal trainer and fitness expert Glenn Higgins suggests blending a frozen banana, 2tbsp peanut butter, 240ml almond milk, 120ml water, chia seeds, oats, 1tsp Greek yoghurt and a few ice cubes. "Add a scoop of your favourite chocolate or vanilla whey protein for an extra muscle-building boost," Higgins says. Don't drink it the second before you head out of the door though – you'll need at least 30 minutes to digest it, so prepare it as soon as you get up.

6 BEAT THE TRAFFIC

Don't stand twiddling your thumbs when you get stopped at a pedestrian crossing – but don't make a mad dash through the traffic either. Instead, take advantage of wearing a backpack and perform this circuit each time you stop.

Jump squat Reps 20

Squat, holding the backpack in front of you. Jump off the ground, then land back in the squat.

Lat stretch Time 15sec

Hold on to the traffic light pole, feeling the stretch in your lats.

Upright row Reps 15

Perform an upright row holding the handle.

Lunge rotation Reps 20

Lunge forward, holding your backpack out in front of you with both hands, arms parallel to the floor. Rotate to the same side as your forward leg.

7 TAKE A RUNNING JUMP

Fences and walls needn't mean a lengthy detour. The step vault, a common parkour move, combines safety and speed to let you clear waist-high obstacles with control. Approach the obstacle and put one hand on it, putting your weight through your shoulder and down your arm. Lift your opposite leg (the outer one) to place the ball of your foot on the obstacle. You should momentarily be balanced on the obstacle between one hand and the opposite leg, with both the palm and foot as flat as possible. Now just step through and continue running. "You land precisely on the other side while still gripping the obstacle," says ultrarunner and parkour fan Christopher McDougall, author of *Born To Run*. "So you land under control and can decide your next move."



3 PACK YOUR BAGS

Don't want to turn up to work looking as if you've never heard of the concept of ironing? Pick up a Wingman bag from Henty (henty.cc). This 14-litre backpack has a system for transporting your suit into work with minimal wrinkles. For a pack designed to keep a laptop safe along with everything else you need, there's the 25-litre ASO Outpost (crumpler.com).

4 MAP IT OUT

Now that you're free from the shackles of the bus route, you can mix up your journey into work. Download My Tracks from the Google Play Store (play.google.com), which uses your phone's GPS to record your speed, distance and elevation when you run (or cycle). You can use the app to find different routes or, if you find a route you like, shave seconds off your time.

5 PICK UP SPEED

A slow jog each morning isn't enough to get the heart going. Add sprint intervals to turn your commute into a workout. "Sprint for 20 seconds, then drop off to a slow jog for 40 seconds to get your breath back," Higgins says. "Repeat this ten to 15 times. This powerful sprint interval session is ideal for a commute as it's not overly complicated and suits any terrain."



BY WILL COCKRELL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRAVIS RATHBONE

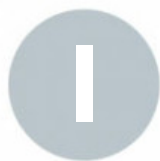
■ KEEP THESE 12 FOODS ON YOUR GROCERY SHOPPING LIST, AND YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE AN ARRAY OF SIMPLE, SURPRISINGLY TASTY AND IMPRESSIVELY CREATIVE MEALS RIGHT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

The indispensable dozen

THE SMART CART

With just these 12 foods (and a few pantry staples), easy, delicious and creative meals can be yours. For more facts about each – and surprising ways to use them – see the following pages.

- 1) Whole chicken
- 2) Sweet potatoes
- 3) Quinoa
- 4) Apples
- 5) Sirloin steak
- 6) Canned sardines
- 7) Parsley
- 8) Eggs
- 9) Kale
- 10) Gruyère cheese
- 11) Avocado
- 12) Spring onions



Imagine being able to cut your grocery shopping time in half and still eat like a king. You can — and it's easier than you think. You see, complicated meals don't necessarily taste any better than simple ones. And even though buying the same 12 ingredients every time you shop may sound boring, what you cook with them doesn't need to taste that way. Take it from two of the best chefs around, Quinn Hatfield and Daniel Humm, who are leading the way in the kind of fresh, simple cooking that will transform your kitchen repertoire. "To eat well, you need to cook for yourself," Humm says. "The more complicated you make it, the less likely you'll do it." He and Hatfield are just like the rest of us: short on time but all too aware of how important it is to be able to fuel up quickly after a workout, as well as take it slow and make something great for a date. And repetition is key: "The way I stock my own fridge is highly repetitive," Hatfield says. "But men love go-to dishes we know how to make well." Here, our megachefs' ultimate grocery list and five powerful yet simple dishes that'll keep you covered for years to come.

OUR CHEFS



Quinn Hatfield

■ Hatfield is a restaurateur, who specializes in the kind of churrasco where fire reigns supreme and meat is taken to the next level. A longtime athlete, he still competes in track cycling.



Daniel Humm

■ Humm is an executive chef, a former pro bike racer and endurance-sport junkie who runs when he's not stuck in the kitchen.

ROASTED CHICKEN BREAST WITH SWEET POTATO GRATIN

SERVES: 2

Most chefs agree that the trickiest thing about cooking a whole chicken is getting the breast just right without overcooking the legs and wings. To solve that problem, Hatfield likes to cook his whole chickens in a small pot. "I have one that the bird fits sort of snug in," he explains. "The breast ends up way up at the top of this pot, so there's enough heat on it for it to get a nice rendering on the skin. And then the juice goes to the bottom, where it gets a little steamier, and that helps cook the legs."



1

WHOLE CHICKEN

By learning how to roast a whole chicken instead of always doing individual breasts, you'll end up with either an impressive meal for a group or more than one meal for yourself. "I always go whole bird — I like the fattier dark meat," Hatfield says. "I'll roast it up and do chicken breasts for dinner, then I've got that dark meat — chicken legs and the rest — for lunch."



Bird feeder. Buying and cooking a whole chicken means you'll have the makings of more than one meal — a real time-saver.

2

SWEET POTATOES

Hatfield considers sweet potatoes a superfood. Unlike regular potatoes, they sit on the right end of the glycemic index, they're filling and they can be made in bulk to be used throughout the week. "I buy bags of them, roast them whole, skin on, then keep a bunch in the fridge and just heat them up later," he says. "They pack a lot of punch nutritionally — a lot of vitamin C and minerals — and are a solid fuel source for an athlete."

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole chicken
Olive oil
- 2 large sweet potatoes (about 500g)
- 120g butter
salt to taste
- 30g grated Gruyère
- 2 handful ripped kale
Red-wine vinegar and pepper, to taste
A few avocado slices

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Preheat oven to 210°. Pat chicken dry and rub with olive oil. Add 350ml water to a high-sided pot the bird will fit snugly in; tuck the wings underneath to raise the breast.
- 2) Place pot on a burner until water boils, then put in oven for about 90 minutes, or until internal temperature of chicken reads 75°. Remove from oven; let rest for 15 minutes.
- 3) Peel sweet potatoes and slice to about 5mm. (A mandoline is especially useful for this.)
- 4) Melt butter in a large sauté pan, then add a third of the potato slices. Season with salt, add another third, season and add the last third and season.
- 5) Place pan in oven and cook 15 minutes. Remove and use a spatula to flip the gratin over in sections. (Don't worry if it falls apart a bit.) Return to oven for 5 minutes, or until potatoes are soft.
- 6) Sprinkle Gruyère on top and return to oven for a minute to melt it.
- 7) Place gratin on plates. Remove breasts from chicken, slice and place on top of gratin.
- 8) Toss kale with oil, vinegar, salt, pepper and avocado for a salad.

BONUS TIP

■ When the chicken is finished cooking, Hatfield pulls the breasts off for this dish, then, after it cools, he pulls the rest of the meat off the bone and uses it for a chicken salad with mayo, spring onions, avocado, diced-up hard-boiled egg and apple.

ROASTED SIRLOIN STEAK WITH HERB SAUCE & SPRING ONION QUINOA

SERVES: 2

Nothing beats the grill for cooking steak, but you can just as easily roast a sirloin, Hatfield says. "I use a little roasting pan with a rack. I pat the sirloin dry, rub it with a little olive oil or a rub, salt and pepper, then put it in the oven. Roasting will still give it great colour."

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch parsley (about 30g), big stems removed, roughly chopped
- 10 tbs extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp red-wine vinegar
- 2 large eggs, hard-boiled and grated
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 cups cooked quinoa
- 60g butter, separated
- 60g whites of spring onion, thinly sliced (about 6 spring onions' worth)
- 1 sirloin steak

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Preheat oven to 210°.
- 2) To make sauce, mix parsley, oil, vinegar, eggs, salt and pepper.
- 3) Cook quinoa per package instructions.
- 4) Place 30g butter in a sauté pan over low heat; add spring onions and cook gently. When totally cooked, add quinoa and a splash of water. Mix and warm through. Season with salt and pepper.
- 5) Rub steak with a little olive oil, then season well with salt and pepper.
- 6) Put steak in a pan with a rack and cook in oven for about an hour, or until the centre reads 55° on a meat thermometer. (Cooking time will depend on preference and the size of the cut.)
- 7) Remove from oven; let cool, uncovered, for 15 minutes, then loosely cover with foil and let rest for another 15 minutes.
- 8) Scoop quinoa into the centre of two plates. Slice the steak 1cm thick and lay over quinoa. Drizzle sauce on top and around.

5

SIRLOIN STEAK

Skirt steak is good if you're in a hurry, but our chefs say that a killer one-kilo sirloin — a cut that's as flavourful as rib-eye but not nearly as expensive — is the way to go for a meal that feels more like an event. Plus, it yields great leftover options for salads or sandwiches. "When I'm thinking big picture, I do sirloins," Hatfield says. "I'll end up roasting a couple at once." Humm suggests finding a butcher who will Cryovac-seal them: "The great thing about steak is it can hold for about two weeks in your refrigerator when it's vacuum-sealed. It's better than freezing it and it actually benefits the beef because it gets more tender — it's basically wet ageing."



Core value. Keep apples on hand to add a real gourmet touch to meals.

3

QUINOA

It cooks just like rice, but our chefs like quinoa because it contains complete protein (usually found only in animal foods) and is more versatile. Quinoa is technically a seed — Hatfield describes it as having a "rich, roasted nutty flavour and an interesting texture when cooked right." It works well with meat and in a hearty salad.

4

APPLE

Hatfield and Humm love apples as a snack in and of themselves but also use them as a high-impact ingredient in salads. "Always have apples on hand," Hatfield insists. "I especially love crisp red apples with a good balance of sweet and tart." But the chefs also like varieties such as Pink Lady.



QUINOA SALAD WITH SARDINES & KALE

SERVES: 2

"I don't eat that much meat," Humm says, explaining the appeal of this hearty-but-vegie-centric salad. "I focus a lot on vegetables, which I think are more interesting and exciting – fresh ingredients, healthy foods."

6

CANNED SARDINES

Canned fish – tuna, mackerel, salmon, sardines – isn't just handy, it also has one of the best protein-to-weight ratios of any food. "Smaller, oily fish like sardines are better than tuna because they have more omega-3s and less mercury," Humm says. "But you can use sardines exactly the same way, on salads, or like with a charcuterie platter, with a little toast or crackers." Hatfield calls canned sardines an "emergency meal" – the perfect snack after a workout.

INGREDIENTS

- Salt
- ½ cup quinoa
- 2 spring onions, thinly sliced
- Olive oil
- Lemon and zest
- 1 egg
- ½ bunch kale, thinly sliced
- ½ avocado, halved and pitted
- Sea salt
- 16 oil-packed sardine fillets
- 2 parsley sprigs

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Bring 3L water to a simmer and season to taste with 3 tbsp salt. Add quinoa and simmer until tender, about 40 minutes. Drain quinoa and rinse with cold water.
- 2) In a bowl, mix quinoa with spring onions. Add 1 tbsp olive oil, 1½ tsp lemon juice and 1¼ tsp salt; stir.
- 3) Bring 2L water to simmer and season to taste with 1½ tsp salt. Gently lower egg into water; simmer 10 minutes. Drain egg; cover with ice water. When cold, peel and slice in half.
- 4) Place kale in a bowl and massage with hands till slightly wilted. Season with 1 tsp lemon juice, zest of ½ lemon (using a microplane), and ¼ tsp salt.
- 5) Scoop out flesh of avocado half and cut into 2 wedges. Carefully season each wedge with olive oil and sea salt.
- 6) Divide sardine fillets and avocado wedges on two plates. Spoon quinoa salad onto plates. Add kale salad, near quinoa. Place an egg half on each plate. Top with parsley.

The Perfect Pantry

Here are nine essentials that should always have a place in your kitchen.

COOKING OILS

Our chefs agree that you need two cooking oils on hand at all times: a high-heat oil like canola for sautéing and frying and an olive oil as a dressing or seasoning. (Using olive oil with high heat can ruin a meal.)

SALT

Both chefs use salt to season dishes – mix in a salad, in cooking water, in sauces – and a pinch of flaky sea salt to finish a dish, on steak or over an egg, adding flavour and crunch.

FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER

Filling an adjustable (not prepacked) grinder with peppercorns will let you put finer grains in recipes and coarser ones on prepped dishes/salads.

BUTTER

Salted butter will boost flavour, whereas unsalted gives you total control of how you salt your dish.

LEMON

A simple squeeze of lemon juice makes a great summer dressing or a seasoning.

VINEGARS

Two vinegars – balsamic and red wine – will cover most of your needs. Red-wine vinegar is the more all-purpose variety, used in typical salad vinaigrettes or even for pickling. Balsamic is sweeter and works best on more delicate vegetables that you don't want to overpower with too much acidity.

MAYONNAISE

Look for healthy whole ingredients that have a fraction of the saturated fat of regular mayo.

MUSTARD

Hatfield loves whole-grain mustard; Humm prefers the kick of Dijon. You can even use mustard to make mayo by mixing it with egg, lemon juice or vinegar and canola oil.

RYE BREAD

Rye bread has a depth of flavour most breads lack. More important, it's hearty and has a long shelf life.

BONUS TIP

■ For a salad like this, Humm says, you can combine any number of foods on your shopping list – swap the sardines for steak, for example, or add apple slices – to create a meal that's perfect for when you get home after a long day. You want something that can be easily thrown together but is also filling and full of flavour.



7

PARSLEY

Parsley is an unsung hero usually written off as just a garnish. "But we've forgotten how it ended up on the plate in the first place," Hatfield says. "It's one of those flavours that brings out a lot of nuance in the things you pair it with. It focuses the flavour of the food around it. And that flash of colour does transform presentation!"

**SARDINES
ARE PACKED
WITH PROTEIN—
AND CAN STAY
ON YOUR SHELF
PRACTICALLY
FOREVER.**

AVOCADO TOAST WITH FRIED EGG & GRUYÈRE

SERVES: 2

"Sometimes the simplest things are best, and this is a prime example," says Humm of this breakfast dish. "The freshness of the avocado is really nice against the richness of the egg." Humm especially likes this dish after training – it's loaded with protein and good fats. To fry the perfect egg, always use a nonstick pan; start on high heat and use enough oil to have a thin layer on the entire bottom of the pan. As soon as you crack the egg into the pan, turn the heat down to low and let it cook until the white is set.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1cm thick slices dark rye bread
- Butter, to taste
- 1 avocado, halved and pitted
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp lemon juice
- 2 eggs
- Sea salt to finish
- Cracked black pepper, to taste
- 8-10 shaves of Gruyère

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Spread each slice of bread lightly with butter, then toast.
- 2) Halve avocado and discard pit; scoop out flesh and place in a bowl with olive oil, salt and lemon juice. Mash it all together with a fork to make a chunky spread. Divide the mashed avocado between the pieces of toast.
- 3) Heat a nonstick pan over medium heat. Fry eggs, sunny-side up. Season the eggs with sea salt and cracked black pepper.
- 4) Just before eggs are finished cooking, use a vegetable peeler to peel several slices of Gruyère onto them; be sure to allow some of the cheese to melt onto the pan and crisp.
- 5) When the eggs are cooked and the cheese has melted, carefully transfer an egg onto each toast.

8

EGGS

"Eggs are especially important if you don't eat a lot of meat – they give you similar protein," Humm says. "And they're obviously great for breakfast; but I like to use them in all kinds of dishes, especially salads." Hatfield actually buys two dozen eggs every time he goes shopping. "I'll boil off a dozen right when I get home from the grocery store so I have hard-boiled eggs in the fridge at all times," he says. "It's another go-to snack – a complete protein, full of amino acids."

UP YOUR
BREAKFAST
OR BRUNCH
"WOW" FACTOR
WITH THIS
SIMPLE BUT
ELEGANT DISH.

SIRLOIN GRUYÈRE MELT

SERVES: 2

Hatfield's favourite use for leftover steak is to put it in a simple sandwich. For this one, he slices it all thin – the steak, cheese, avocado and kale – and finishes it off in the oven. “Sirloin also eats great cold,” he says, “whether on a sandwich or a salad.”

INGREDIENTS

- 450g cooked sirloin steak, cold, thinly sliced with a serrated knife
- 2 tsp mayonnaise
- 2 slices dark rye bread
- Gruyère, thinly sliced, to taste
- 1 avocado, thinly sliced
- 2 handfuls kale, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp whole-grain mustard

DIRECTIONS

Cautiously reheat sliced steak in microwave, using short 15-30-second pulses to avoid heating, “which would completely ruin it”, says Hatfield. Spread mayonnaise on each side of bread. Pile the sliced beef on it and add Gruyère, avocado, kale and mustard. Place open-faced on a pan in a warm oven till cheese is melted.



9

KALE

“Kale is the go-to green because it has such a great shelf life and seasonality is less important,” Humm says. Plus, it tastes good raw or cooked, both chefs agree. “You could say the same about spinach,” Hatfield says, “but I find spinach too delicate, especially for a salad. And it gets that weird mouthfeel if you don’t cook it right.” At the store, look for kale that feels crisp and alive, with good bright colour and no wilting. And if the edges where it’s been cut are browning, avoid it.



10

GRUYÈRE CHEESE

Hard cheeses work well grated over hot or cold dishes. Both chefs like Parmesan, too, but say Gruyère – slightly softer and richer – takes dishes up a level. Hatfield uses it to liven up everything from sandwiches to an omelette; Humm builds whole meals around it: “Eat it with some kale, apples, and olive oil drizzled on top for an easy, light snack.”

11

AVOCADO

Our chefs consider the beloved avocado a breakfast, lunch or dinner ingredient – it’s rich, has great texture and is high in good fat. Humm likes it in salads but also on its own. “When shopping, look for avocados that are firm but give slightly when gently squeezed,” he says. “And avoid those with super-soft spots.” Also, he says, keep the unused part in its skin and wrap to store.

12

SPRING ONIONS

Spring onions are a great flavour booster. Plus, they can be used in more than one way. “You can use the green part like a herb, on top of something, and use the bottom of the spring onion like an onion,” Hatfield loves spring onions paired with parsley. When buying them, you want white whites and green greens.

Words Joel Snape
Photography Joel Anderson

go with the flow

Harness the mental state known as flow, and you'll focus better and work harder – both in the gym and in life. Learn from the masters and rise above your everyday toil.

Model: Jay Corrao @WalterGrooming, Alicia TheBald @JoyGoodman



“Flow”, to the uninitiated, sounds like a term dreamed up by new-age gurus to describe what happens at a class they might call Rainbow Rhythms. It is not.

Technically, it's defined as an “optimal state of consciousness where we feel our best and perform our best”. According to Steven Kotler, creator of the Flow Genome Project, “Concentration becomes so laser-focused that everything else falls away. Action and awareness merge. Our sense of self and self-consciousness completely disappear. And, of course, all aspects of performance are incredibly heightened.”

This, of course, is not news to top performers around the world, who've been harnessing the state through workouts since before the term was coined. Over the following pages, you'll find a selection of workouts designed to harness the flow state and increase your work capacity – without the grind.

Core strength and agility

Before you build, you need firm foundations. Ginástica Natural, developed by surfer and Brazilian jiu jitsu expert Alvaro Romano, fuses moves from both disciplines into a nonstop workout that'll challenge both your core and your co-ordination. Do this entry-level flow at least once a week.



2 LUNGE TWIST

With your leg still forward, feeling the stretch, twist to face your leading knee and bring the hand on that side into the air. Hold it, then step into the same stretch on the other side.



3 ROLL

From the lunge, pass the arm opposite your forward leg in front of your body and roll onto that side, coming back up into a crouch.



1 KICKBACK

Starting from standing, dive forward onto your hands, bringing your leg high up behind you. Bring your foot down and go straight into the next move.





4 COSSACK

From your crouching position, bring one leg straight up in the air as if you're kicking an opponent above you. Hold, then repeat on the other side.



5 HOLLOW SIT TO PUSHUP

From the cossack, lower yourself to the ground, hold briefly and then spin your legs around behind you, coming into a pushup.



6 POP-UP

From the pushup position, lower to the floor and then explode up, as if you're jumping onto a surfboard.



Power and endurance

You don't need weights to build a physique worthy of an MMA fighter. Former submission wrestling world champion André Galvão combines gymnastic moves and animal drills into a cardio-sapping circuit. Do them for five nonstop minutes at the end of your workout.



1 ALLIGATOR WALK

Bring one knee up as high as possible next to the elbow on the same side, keeping your hips as low as you can. Lower into a pushup, then repeat on the other side so you "crawl" forward, gator style.

FLOW TRIGGER #1 DEEP FOCUS

Multitasking is out, solitude is in. Switch your phone to airplane mode and put your earphones in. It'll work in the gym, but also during the daily grind.

2 GORILLA WALK

From a squatting position, walk your hands forward on the floor until you're stretched almost full-length, then sit back on your haunches briefly and explode forward into a jump, landing with your feet by your hands. Repeat five times.

FLOW TRIGGER #2 INSTANT FEEDBACK

Clear goals maintain focus, so know how many reps you're going for on every move you do. For more feedback, download the Coach's Eye app to assess your form on the go.



3 MACACO

It's Portuguese for "monkey". Sit with your hands and the soles of your feet on the floor, then bridge up, bring your arm behind your head and move on to your toes. Experts would move into a flip – you should hold the position for a second, lower and repeat on the other side.



4 TECHNICAL STAND

Fighters use this to get up efficiently, but it's also a core-bracer. After sitting down when you finish the macaco, fold one leg under yourself and plant your other heel on the ground, pressing your weight through it to stand up.



Mobility and speed

Functional muscle is about movement, not size. Build both mobility and speed with these moves inspired by free running and calisthenics.



1 SQUAT TO ALL FOURS

Keeping your weight on your heels, do a squat. Staying controlled, lean forward onto all fours. Go straight into the next move.



2 DIVEBOMBER PUSHUP

Starting on all fours, dive your face towards the floor, trying to keep as low as possible. At the end of the move, bring your chest up.

FLOW TRIGGER #3 UNPREDICTABILITY

Like a surfer facing a terrifying wave or a rock climber on a high face, reach the flow state by performing at a training pace that's only just manageable.



3 MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

Without taking your hands off the floor, pop up into a pushup position and then bring one knee forward, then the other.

FLOW TRIGGER #4 RISK

You need something on the line, even if it's only the fear of failure. Aim for a rep record in the gym and commit to it fully – whether you pass or fail, it'll ensure concentration.



4 SIT-OUT

Starting on all fours, take one hand off the floor and "kick" the opposite leg through to where it used to be. ■



When stress



doesn't suck

What you think is killing you
should actually make you stronger.

By Michael Behar

Photographs by Christopher Griffith



“You seem tense,” my iPhone texts me, and suggests I



take a brief meditation break. Is it reading my mind?

No, it's just a message from the 5cm grey orb attached to the waistband of my jeans, called Spire, which monitors my respiratory rhythms and alerts me whenever it senses a period of rapid, shallow breaths. Spire was invented by Dr Neema Moraveji, a computer scientist who directs Stanford University's Calming Technology Lab in the US, where his team has studied prototypes like Mail0, touted as "the world's first calming email client", as well as Morphine Drip, an app for injured athletes stressed out because they can't play. "We're also trying to bring natural elements into sterile work environments," says Moraveji. "This includes outfitting desks with real grass."

These are just some of the latest products to join a global marketplace filled with anti-stress teas, body lotions, shampoos, colognes, dermal patches, even socks. On my desk is a vial of Bach Rescue Remedy Natural Stress Relief. Four drops of this homeopathic concoction on my tongue should alleviate "everyday stress", the label claims. Like gazillions of other supplements purported to reduce stress, Rescue Remedy doesn't work. (Or at least, not in my case, according to my new monitor.) But that doesn't stop people from buying it. Stress is a national obsession, and it's not good news for the economy. According to a 2013 report by Safe Work Australia, job- and workplace-related stress annually costs Australian industries upwards of \$10 billion.

The problem isn't that stress is killing you – it's that you believe stress is killing you.

But unlike the marketers of herbal potions, the makers of Spire – a truly promising stress-relief aid – make no bold claims that their product will magically wash away your stress. In fact, Moraveji tells me, "our company is not about stress reduction. Stress is a part of life." That's because Moraveji,

along with a growing number of scientists, doesn't think stress is actually bad for you. To echo stress researcher Shawn Achor: the problem isn't that stress is killing you – it's that you believe stress is killing you.

Achor should know. In 2007, while studying ethics at Harvard in the US, he founded GoodThink, a research and consulting firm. In 2010, he wrote the book *The Happiness Advantage*, on the power of positive psychology. And in 2013, he co-authored a study, published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, which demonstrated that "it's how people perceive stress" that determines how it impacts our health.

Stress scientists call this phenomenon the "stress paradox". When your boss yells at you, your endocrine system dumps stress hormones – adrenaline, cortisol, norepinephrine – into your bloodstream that

Researchers believe the act of mentally embracing stress can yield physiological changes – genes firing, neurons rewiring – that measurably improve mental and physical performance.

set off the classic fight-or-flight response. Your heart rate and blood pressure elevate, your breathing ramps up and your metabolism rapidly converts fat into fuel to power your muscles. An evolutionary adaptation, the stress response saved us from life-threatening situations in the wild. Too much stress, however, produces an overabundance of these hormones that begin dissolving vital organs, like Drano in the bloodstream. (For instance, cortisol causes oxidative stress, a process that plunders electrons from atoms within healthy cells, the way rust rips apart steel.)

The paradox, says US Stanford University neuroimmunology professor Dr Firdaus Dhabhar, is that those same toxic, harmful molecules that we associate with stress – though in lesser amounts and for shorter periods of time – are precisely what make you healthier and stronger.

When you engage in high-intensity exercise like CrossFit, your body reacts to the external challenge and activates similar mechanisms responsible for the fight-or-flight stress response – sometimes for several hours at a time. When released for a short period of time, defined as “minutes to hours”, the adrenaline, cortisol and norepinephrine can function in harmony to build up your body, then dissipate over time. “Exercise can induce a beneficial stress response,” says Dhabhar.

The spike in heart rate, respiration and energy lets you train harder, which builds muscle. The fight-or-flight response also activates your brain’s endocrine, immune and metabolic machinery. Together, these systems dispense insulin, testosterone and growth hormones (among other hormones) and also communicate with various genes and proteins that alter the brain, as well as muscle tissue – both skeletal and heart – to boost strength and stamina.

“Exercise creates a positive balance of chemicals that can have positive effects on the heart and the brain,” says Dr Bruce McEwen, a professor of neuroscience at Rockefeller University in the US.

Of course, striking that effective balance of fight-or-flight molecules comes easier for some people than others. And, say McEwen and Dhabhar, both pioneers in the stress-is-good-for-you research field, our ability to cope with stress derives from several factors, including both nature (McEwen has identified specific genes that are part of the body’s response to stress) and nurture (science confirms that prolonged stress during childhood, from things like abuse, malnutrition or abandonment, will breed adults who instinctively loathe stress and, consequently, will suffer physically from it).

But how does the stress paradox work for everyone? Dhabhar and McEwen, along with a cadre of other researchers, are trying to solve that mystery. And after studying both animals’ and humans’ brains, genes and responses to exercise, they believe not only that our mindset is the single biggest determining factor in whether stress is ultimately toxic or beneficial to health, but also that the simple act of having a positive attitude about stress can yield discernible physiological changes – genes firing, neurons rewiring – that measurably improve mental and physical performance.

It’s for this reason that Achor collaborated with Moraveji to develop Spire – because it’s much easier to embrace stress once you’ve been alerted to the fact you’re stressed in the first place, so you can identify its source. (Spoiler alert: this isn’t as easy as you might think.)

“Basically, we’ve discovered that if you think of stress as something that will impede your performance, it will do exactly that,” says Achor. But if you treat stress as a challenge, you’ll emerge stronger than ever.

You’ve just got to learn how to do it.

Everything you know about stress is wrong

B

Blame the modern-day stress-is-evil epidemic on a Hungarian endocrinologist named Hans Selye. In 1934, while doing sex-hormone research at McGill University in Canada, Selye, who was 28, began experimenting on lab rats. With the rodents strapped to a plank, he injected them with irritating substances like formaldehyde, starved them, shocked them, chilled them and inflicted various other forms of torture, then examined their internal organs.

In a pivotal *Nature* paper he published in 1936, Selye used the word *stress* to describe how his test subjects had responded to their torment. (At the time, he actually meant *strain*, but the linguistic error stuck.) He later performed similar atrocities on chickens, dogs, guinea pigs and monkeys and went on to write in the *British Medical Journal* that his experiments produced outcomes “not unlike that occasioned by physical and mental fatigue in man”.

Alas, stress as a vague but malicious force was born.

In Selye’s 1956 book *The Stress of Life*, he introduced the concept of “general adaptation syndrome”: that stress can be a nefarious accomplice of common afflictions like heart disease, ulcers, arthritis, hypertension and cancer. Yet, even today, 60-plus years later, there’s still no consensus on what stress actually is.

“Perhaps the single most remarkable historical fact concerning the term ‘stress’... is [the] almost chaotic disagreement over its definition,” wrote Dr John Mason, a psychiatry professor who pioneered the diagnosis of PTSD following the Vietnam War and emerged as one of Selye’s more vehement detractors. While Selye believed stress was a *physiological* reaction, like getting a fever, scientists in Mason’s camp considered stress a largely *psychological* condition, requiring emotional arousal to produce its main hormonal effects: in other words, if you’re physically stressed (say, hungry or exhausted) but not emotionally stressed (eg, afraid or angry), the stress you experience will be minimal. That argument over the role of stress in our bodies continues.

Selye embraced the idea that stress wasn’t all bad in his 1974 book *Stress Without Distress*. He thought “stress was not only the bane, but also the spice of life... for complete rest means death,” says Dr Mark Jackson, a history of medicine professor at the University of Exeter in the UK. Though he wasn’t the first: in the 1800s, while studying the causes of insanity, British psychiatrist Charles Mercier wrote that poor health could often be traced to “the boredom of insufficient stress”.

“Even at the beginning, people were saying a certain amount of stress can be good for you and that we shouldn’t just live quiet, calm lives,” says Jackson, author of *The Age of Stress: Science and the Search for Stability*. “Some pressure, some stressful preoccupation is actually very healthy. It’s always been double-edged.”

Among scientists, learning how to harness stress to boost performance has been a more recent endeavour. GoodThink’s Shawn Achor got the idea for his mindset study while he was in US Marine boot camp. “To pay for Harvard, I had to do a military scholarship,” he says. “There was no praise. I was just getting yelled at for not doing pushups fast enough. It taught me from the beginning that when stress happens, I have to embrace it. Like, ‘Cool, I get to go for a run’ instead of ‘I can’t

Monitoring my stress monitor

What our correspondent learnt after spending a week under the watchful gaze of the newest body tracker.

believe I have to go for a run.’” He remembers that anyone in boot camp who didn’t man up to the hardships eventually dropped out – “They broke because the stress was too much for them” – and decided to find out if there was an underlying physiological reaction at play.

For his 2013 study, Achor partnered with Stanford’s Dr Alia Crum and recruited 388 employees of major financial institutions, mostly investment bankers and wealth managers. Crum asked each participant a lengthy set of questions to gauge their stress level, physical health and mental wellbeing and found that all were acutely stressed out – which made sense, Achor says, since the study began not long after the start of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. Next, they showed half the subjects a short, uplifting video that presented scientific evidence on the “enhancing nature of stress”, while the other half viewed a slow-moving downer bemoaning the “debilitating nature of stress”.

The upshot: when questioned again, those who’d watched the positive video felt less stressed and in the following months had 23% fewer stress-related health problems – and all from one corny video.

In a subsequent study, Achor and Crum gathered 63 uni students and told them to prepare to speak publicly in front of their classmates, who would evaluate their performance – a scenario that would freak out most people. They then interviewed each student to determine how he or she perceived stress (love it, hate it), then took saliva samples to measure the stress hormone cortisol. Sure enough, the students who claimed they thrived on stress had a quick spike in cortisol that then dropped off precipitously, suggesting a robust and healthy fight-or-flight response that elevates focus and energy. But in those who feared the speech, the cortisol lingered for far longer.

The findings led Achor and Crum to work with Moraveji on developing the Spire stress monitor, which – along with its competitors, like PIP, Tinké, Olive and Embrace – could have a profound effect on how the average person perceives stress. As I found when wearing the monitor for several days (see the sidebar at right), the obvious triggers for stress – job woes, family tensions, traffic jams – didn’t actually trip my fight-or-flight response. Most often it was something mundane that activated the Spire stress alarm. For instance, I discovered that perusing my email inbox routinely makes me tense, as does the chirping of incoming texts.

“Knowing what really riles you is the first step towards harnessing the power of stress to make you healthier and happier,” says Achor. But, how to game stress to your advantage?

You can make stress work for you

Rockefeller U’s McEwen has spent years studying the impacts of stress on the body and believes the notion of mindset – the trendier term is mindfulness – is more than just some hippythink abstraction: evidence is growing that what you think can change your body right down to your cells. It’s all related to “neural plasticity”, the concept that many factors – environment, emotions, injuries – can cause the brain to “rewire” itself to compensate, for better or for worse.

Toxic, uncontrolled stress is one factor that can cause this brain change. Using medical imaging on animal models and human subjects, researchers found evidence that stress withered not just the brain’s hippocampus, where memories are stored, but its prefrontal cortex, which handles complex problem solving and helps regulate behaviour and mood. It swelled the amygdala, the brain’s fear centre, as well.

His latest research also found that, during chronic stress, blocks of “junk DNA” – human DNA once thought to have no biological function

Countless new gadgets advertise the ability to monitor your stress. Some log heart rate; others record electrical impulses. Granted, the only 100% bombproof method would be collecting saliva and blood samples to chart your stress hormones. Even so, wearables do a really good job. For one week, I wore a Spire monitor (\$230, spire.io), which tracks respiratory rhythms. Here are three things I learnt. –M.B.

1) Stress monitors are really great at measuring calm

Spire parses moods into four categories – calm, tense, activity and focus – and knows how long you’re in each realm. It’s most valuable teaching you what makes you calm. I discovered that my longest stress-free “calm” periods occurred when I cooked for my family or read to my five-year-old son before bedtime. I plan to do more of both.

2) Booze agitates

In what I thought were two very stressful events – an argument with my wife and a reprimand to my kid – Spire’s only reaction was to inform me I was “active” (duh, I was pacing). Perhaps this is good news? My big surprise: alcohol triggers stress. A martini roused Spire’s “tense” alert after the first sip. Oddly, though, red wine didn’t.

3) A stress monitor is a helicopter parent

While working, the Spire – pressed against my skin on my belt line – often drove me bonkers. Every ten minutes, it would text me (via my iPhone) that I was “tense”, then vibrate against my belly until my stress abated. At first, this only made me more stressed! To keep calm – and meet my deadline – I shoved Spire into a drawer. But even in exile, Spire kept at it, dispatching its admonitions: “You’ve been pretty sedentary for 60 minutes. Time to stretch your legs?” Yet I plan to keep using it.

The new Spire stress monitor, developed at Stanford University in the US. The rock-like thing it’s sitting on is actually its charger.



because it didn't transmit genetically coded instructions to cells – actually awaken and wreak havoc on the body. On the bright side, engaging the right mindset has the power to both reverse and prevent damage caused by stress, McEwen says.

TACTIC NO. 1: Understand the difference between physical stressors (like exercise) that often physiologically benefit you and emotional stressors (anger, frustration) that, if allowed to persist, can keep your body's chemical stress machinery running too long.

In the case of the latter, it's about finding the right mindset: "Deal with the present and don't worry about things you don't have any control over," says McEwen. When you do that, "studies have shown... meaningful brain changes in terms of connectivity patterns."

You can take it a step further and engage in mindful meditation: for just a few minutes, relax, clear your mind and focus on your breath. It's a powerful technique that can sprout new brain cells – like a lizard regrowing a severed tail. Studies show you'll have a stronger immune system and better cardiovascular activity, which will boost your physical performance by getting more oxygen into your blood.

TACTIC NO. 2: Fine-tune the intensity and duration of workouts to take full advantage of physical stress – but don't go overboard.

Using brain scans, McEwen has seen that regular aerobic exercise – even just a brisk walk – stimulates neural growth and blood flow to the brain, as do weightlifting and interval training. But according to Dr Jay Hoffman, a professor of exercise science at the University of Central Florida in the US, it takes intense physical activity to ultimately increase strength and performance. Charging hard deluges the body with stress hormones. These hormones energise your metabolism, which helps you train "at a higher level than you're accustomed to," says Hoffman. Doing so "creates stress that will cause some small damage. But the resulting recovery will enhance the physiological system."

But if you get carried away, the paradox begins to work against you.

When McEwen and researchers at Japan's University of Tsukuba put rats on treadmills at different paces, they found that running at a moderate intensity provided the most physical benefits from stress.

How to tell if you're stressed (without a newfangled monitor)...

Do a body check

■ Got cold or sweaty palms, tense or twitching muscles, diarrhoea, nausea or dizziness? Is your heart pounding? Are you breathing rapidly? Clenching your jaw? The body releases adrenaline and cortisol when stressed, raising heart rate and BP – so any physical symptom can be a sign.

Do a head check

■ Suddenly unable to concentrate? Dwelling on negative thoughts or nagging worries? Irritable or freaking out over small mistakes? Beating yourself up or feeling overwhelmed? Anxious for a cigarette or a drink? Yup, that's probably stress.

...and what to do if you are

Take physical action

■ Anything that relaxes you quickly is probably a stress beater. So do a breathing exercise; listen to a guided mindfulness exercise (no eye-rolling – it really works) from marc.ucla.edu; listen to calming music; watch a funny YouTube video; or do five minutes of a favourite workout move or a 60-second yoga pose.

Take psychological action

■ If emotional changes – fear, anger, frustration – accompany physical stressors, the actual stress will be greater, John Mason of Yale University in the US found. So nip it in the bud by immediately IDing any stress-causing emotions and using positive self-talk – along with the physical strategies suggested above – till you're calm again. –ADAM BIBLE



Easy, rider:
Overtraining can
lead to toxic stress.

In humans, this suggests that during intense exercise, you should hover right around your VO2 max. Going above VO2 max is OK – but not too far and only in short stints, Hoffman says. More, and you're overtraining, risking toxic stress. Hoffman proved this in studies he conducted on pro basketball players. He found that when coaches compelled players to perform too far beyond their capabilities, the benefits of training dropped off – they couldn't jump as high or squat as much weight; their reaction time slowed and endurance dwindled.

"If it's easy for you to lift 45kg, you have to lift 50kg, then do the same number of repetitions till it gets easier," says Hoffman. "This is considered 'progressive overload': as soon as the body adapts to a new kind of stress, you then increase the stress."

But suddenly jump from 50kg to 70kg and the stress can create "a pathological, not a physical adaptation," he explains. All that overtraining forces the fight-or-flight response into a feedback loop, breeding a type of exercise-induced chronic stress that can lead to thyroid and immune disorders, high blood pressure, heart disease, weight gain and depression. For it to supercharge health and fitness, the fight-or-flight response must be short-lived.

Normally, exercise stress stimulates your immune system to protect against infections and other diseases, including cancer. Studies by Dhabhar at Stanford show that a moderate workout prior to surgery can speed up recovery. But there's always a danger of stress overload. In marathoners, Hoffman has seen "an increase in upper-respiratory-track infections and other changes to the immune system," he says. Group exercise can be particularly problematic because a trainer or coach doesn't know each individual's limits.

"The body's very good at not trying to kill itself," he says. "We have an innate mechanism that tells us when to slow down. We run into issues when we have an external force – like a CrossFit coach – pushing somebody past where they feel comfortable."

TACTIC NO. 3: Have more sex, says Dhabhar. It mitigates the harmful effects of chronic stress while also triggering the kind of chemical response you get from exercise. Plus, it's the one activity that produces positive stress that even the most virile dudes can't overdo. ■

TAKE FIVE

The upside of never being satisfied is that we're constantly imagining what might be next. We built our own Win Tunnel in 2013 because we believed that for cycling, the science of speed hadn't begun to be understood. We were sure that it would help us create a system of products that make you faster.

To learn everything about the innovation and advancements in speed, go to:
specialized.com/5minutes

Go on, you now have an extra five minutes to spare.





2015
Men's Fitness

gift FATHER'S DAY guide

He may be unfit and unfashionable,
but he's still your dad. Get him something nice.



Handyman heaven

Hart Screwdriver Set

- Nothing says, "I love you, Dad, you old bastard," more than a set of screwdrivers. These hardcore champions are super-tough and durable – the tips are made from magnetised solid steel and the hex shank is SVCM alloy steel for extra flexibility.

harttools.com.au/

Adventure time

Seiko Prospex Kinetic

- Powered by the movement of your body – great news for heavy exercisers or shaky types – the Prospex Kinetic also tells GMT and is water-resistant to 100m, ensuring your next underwater expedition goes to plan.

\$650, seiko.com.au

The big see

Electric sunglasses

- As spring eases in, the sun begins to get louder and Dad raids his dusty dressing table for a pair of functioning sunnies. Score him a smart upgrade from Electric, so he can give that big orange ball in the sky the finger – with style.

electriccalifornia.com

Monster mash

Vitamix S30 colour range

- Crushes ice and blends the toughest whole-food ingredients, so your old man can whip up a nuclear-strength smoothie or strange "Dad" concoction in a jiff. Double-walled to insulate and hold temperatures.

\$845, vitamix.com.au

Hail the DJ

Braven BRV-X Waterproof Bluetooth speaker

- Your dad's next outdoor shindig won't be blighted by inauthentic representations of Angus Young's iconic guitar sound thanks to this groovy palm-sized speaker, which is waterproof, shock-absorbent and ultra-lightweight. Rock on.

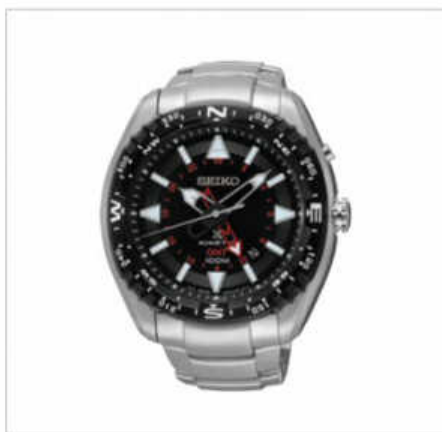
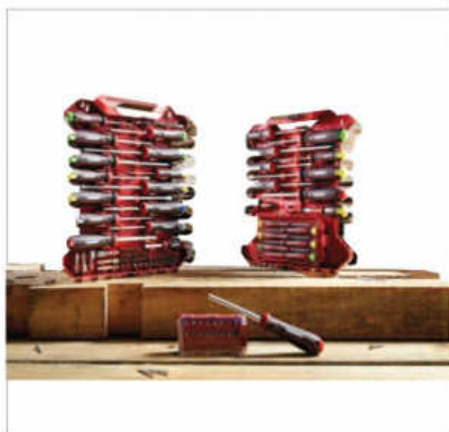
\$294, jbhifi.com.au

Tipple longer

Whiskey Wedge

- Dad's regular afternoon/nightly snifter will never go warm again courtesy of this excellent double whiskey glass and ice-wedge combo, which enables the ice to melt slowly thanks to the reduced surface area of the wedge.

\$34.95, beyondcool.com.au



Opposite page

The wheel thing

Specialized FATBOY

- Perfect for trail riding or powering away from the ex-missus. Don't let the humungous tyres fool you, the Fatboy is light enough to smash a PB and keep up with the peleton. Extra-strong and sturdy, it will suit dads of all shapes, sizes and pedalling capacities.

\$1,799, specialized.com



2015 Men's Fitness

Clockwise from left

GLOBE HALF DIP CRUISER

OWN THE CONCRETE

Made from walnut wood with a Canadian hard rock maple core, this top-line skateboard will have your dad shredding hard and quite possibly cramping your style at the skate park. Still, much better than him drinking away the family fortune at the local boozier.

\$229.99, globebrand.com/au

WAHL STAINLESS STEEL TRIMMER

CUTTING-EDGE FACE FUZZ

Older blokes might think a five-day growth is the equivalent of a hipster beard; in reality it says "derro". Spruce your dad up – and save him from the scrapheap – with this premium trimmer, which will have him looking smooth and less threatening in no time.

\$149.95, shavershop.com.au

VARIDESK

STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

If your father works at a desk all day, he probably looks like a) a twisted thing, or b) the hunchback of Notre-Dame. Help save him from his horrible fate with the height-adjustable Varidesk, which will enable him to sit or stand at work, and help correct posture. \$475, au.varidesk.com

JAWBONE UP3

BACK ON TRACK

If Dad glues himself to the couch, this nifty tracker might be the spur he needs to start exercising and lose that oh-so-flabby gut and grumpy 'tude. The UP3 monitors steps, exercise, calories burnt, sleep duration and sleep quality, so the old fella can chart his progress.

\$249.99, 247wearables.com.au

BLUNDSTONE URBANS

GIVE FASHION THE BOOT

Blunnies are style classics: unlike Crocs or jandals, they are always in. The Urbans range is designed to look good on the street, where it counts. This distressed, brown leather pair is soft and supple, yet tough enough to withstand the bumps and scrapes that life in the city brings.

\$160, blundstoneurbans.com

"When you're young, you think Dad is Superman. Then you grow up and realise he's just a regular guy with a cape."





Clockwise from left

BLACK DIAMOND EMBER POWERLIGHT

KING OF THE NIGHT

The Ember Power Light illuminates the trail ahead, ensuring Dad doesn't accidentally trip over a random marsupial and damage that gammy knee of his. It will also charge his phone when he gets to camp — assuming he makes it.

\$79.95, seatosummitdistribution.com.au

DAVIDOFF THE BRILLIANT GAME

SMELL LIKE A WINNER

According to its creator, this aftershave captures the moment in a game "when you feel confident, positive and victory is just a natural consequence". This is the fragrance to sport when you're in the zone; be it cleaning up on the craps table, or charming the metaphorical pants off ladies.

60ml/\$80; 100ml/\$110
thegame-fragrance.com

BLACK DIAMOND LIQUID POINT SHELL

BOSS THE WILDERNESS

Built with Gore-Tex PacLite, the Liquid Point Shell provides great protection against the elements, so Dad will be fully comfy on his next misguided mission to reach the South Pole or somewhere else cold.

\$439.95, seatosummitdistribution.com.au

TURTLE BEACH ELITE 800X

NOISE FOR THE BOYS

Dad may be crap at FIFA 15 but this gaming headset will at least make him feel like his hearing is working well. The Elite 800X is the ultimate in completely wireless Xbox One noise-cancelling, emitting one helluva powerful sound.

\$449, turtlebeach.com/elite

LQD GIFT PACK

SMOOTH ON UP

If Dad's dodgy dial is looking as dry and pock-marked as the Nullarbor Plain, LQD's gift pack will give his ravaged face a much-needed boost. It includes premium shaving, washing, scrubbing and calming products.

\$200, lqdsincare.com.au



Believe the Hype!



BODYSCIENCE.COM.AU

In the exploding world of "e-Sports" – where top *League of Legends* and *Call of Duty* players collect six-figure payouts, Red Bull sponsorships and millions of fans across the globe – one competitor, OpTic Gaming's Mike "Flamesword" Chaves, is leading a fitness revolution.

BY JOSH DEAN



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW HETHERINGTON
STILL LIFE BY NICK FERRARI

Not your average nerd.
Mike "Flamesword" Chaves,
the 25-year-old coach of
OpTic Gaming's Halo and
Call of Duty teams.

Our neighbours
probably think we're
drug dealers. We're
a bunch of guys
who are up late and
never go outside."

● The man known to legions of adoring fans as “Flamesword” rises at around 8am from his “prized possession”, a Tempur-Pedic mattress with built-in massage, and heads downstairs several hours before his five roommates, who maintain the schedule of vampires, would even dream of getting out of bed.

Wearing shorts, moccasin-style slippers and a royal blue T-shirt, Flamesword – real name Mike Chaves – steps around the jugs of spring water in the front hall, avoids the thicket of electrical cords snaking off the dining-room table and takes care not to overturn any of the teetering stacks of Red Bull cases scattered about the four-bedroom colonial-style house in a generic swath of exurbia hacked from the flat woods west of the sprawling US city of Chicago.

There’s no noise, save the soft hum of the idling computers that sit unattended on nearly every flat surface, making it seem as if a gang of hackers had fled the scene in a hurry. “Our neighbours probably think we’re drug dealers,” Chaves jokes. “We’re a bunch of young guys who are up late and never go outside.” It didn’t help their image when, in 2013, the local police department descended on the house wearing Kevlar vests and carrying machine guns after anonymous online pranksters reported a fake hostage situation at their address – a practical joke known in online circles as “swatting”.

Of course, Chaves and his roommates aren’t criminals. They’re professional athletes. To be more specific, they’re professional “e-athletes”, leaders of a new and rapidly growing vanguard of young men who’ve got famous – and in some cases, rich – for being as extraordinary at playing video games as Steve Smith is at clubbing Pommy bowlers to the boundary.

And, like pros in other sports, they compete for a team. In this case, it’s OpTic Gaming, an e-Sports “franchise” founded by Hector Rodriguez, a young entrepreneur who left a finance job to become one of the first team owners in the sport. Rodriguez provides housing, travel expenses and exposure for everyone in the so-called “OpTic House”, home to some of the most successful gamers on the planet. Two of Chaves’ roommates drive expensive, late-model German luxury cars, including the guy whose bedroom is across the hall from his. That would be Matt “NaDeSHoT” Haag, the 22-year-old *Call of Duty* star who’s almost certainly one of the most famous gamers alive. Haag earns upward of a million dollars a year and, like the rest of OpTic Gaming, is sponsored by Red Bull.

Chaves was recruited to OpTic House in 2013, when Rodriguez was looking for someone to coach his crack *Call of Duty* team, even though *Call of Duty* isn’t Chaves’ specialty – he excels at *Halo*, another first-person, military-style shooter, which had fallen out of favour in recent years and is experiencing something of a resurgence of late. (Chaves will lead the new OpTic *Halo* team, too.)

Rodriguez admired Chaves’ expertise in strategy, communication and team play, which he felt would be an asset to his group. More

important, though, Rodriguez wanted Chaves because of what he represented: a new breed of gamer who understands that his health and fitness directly affect his playing strategy and kill rate.

“I knew Mike could help us reshape our lives into something a little bit healthier and better for the overall gaming lifestyle,” Rodriguez told me.

Chaves is just 170cm and has the athletic build of an AFL midfielder. While his roommates are sleeping, he rummages through cabinets and the freezer, pulling out various bottles and bags until he’s assembled the ingredients for a smoothie: a banana-blueberry-peanut butter blend with oatmeal, flaxseed, multivitamin powder and chocolate whey protein. As he dumps in two scoops, I scan the room. All around him are signs of dietary wandering: sugared cereals, bags of Oreos, a bottle of Grey Goose. “At the end of the day I can’t stop them from eating what they want,” he says, shaking his head.

Still, he’s had a profound effect on his roomies. They’ve all changed their diets and most have joined him for workouts – at least here and there. His biggest success is Marcus “MBoZe” Blanks, a 19-year-old gaming prodigy who moved in weighing 165kg. Seven months later, thanks to Chaves’ regimen of full-body workouts and rigid dieting, he’s down to 125kg.

“The process was dreadful for someone who barely worked out, ever, in his life,” says Blanks. “But once I got the hang of it, the days flew by.” And becoming fitter has paid off in myriad ways. “For gaming, it’s made me a lot more alert and a lot more focused,” he says. “And now I actually don’t mind taking pictures with fans and seeing them tweeting it out anymore.”

Chaves prefers to stay around 70kg, but he’s considering putting on a little bulk as he gears up for competition. “It’s all about finding the right balance and feeling relaxed and better,” he says. While travelling, which he does often, he keeps mentally and physically fit with his “four-minute hotel workouts”, high-intensity bursts designed to offset the languor of sitting for eight hours straight during a competition. The workout [see page 99] has become very popular on his YouTube channel, where 160,000 video game enthusiasts routinely tune in for his exercise tips and diet advice.

“Sitting down all day is terrible for the body, yet that’s what I do for a living,” he says. “So exercise is crucial for the mind, for the body and for feeling relaxed. I’ve seen my greatest success since I started really working out and keeping fit a few years ago – and that includes four world championships versus the zero I’d won before.”

● THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY CURRENTLY GENERATES more than \$71 billion in annual revenue, and that’s just in the US – more than the music industry and not far behind Hollywood. Every year, it expands by leaps and bounds. And e-Sports, as the top level of competitive game play, is on an equally precipitous growth track.

For example, three years ago there were 8,800 e-Sports tournaments held around the world, according to Battlefy, an industry analyst group. In 2014, that number was 47,500. The most famous game, by far, is *League of Legends*, which 27 million people play on any given day. Unlike *Call of Duty*, it's played on computers, not consoles and is global in scope. Its most fervent fans are in South Korea, where two different TV channels are devoted to video games and professional *League of Legends* matches regularly sell out arenas; but that fervour is reaching these shores, too. In 2013, the *League of Legends* world championship sold out LA's Staples Center and was watched live online by 32 million people – a shitload more than watch State of Origin, the AFL Grand Final or any single World Series baseball game in the US.

Last year, Chicago's Robert Morris University became the first college to create a varsity e-Sports athletic team, complete with scholarships (they focus on *League of Legends*, for now), and ESPN added e-Sports to the roster of both the summer and winter X Games. Even the US government recognises the revolution that's afoot. As of 2014, the State Department now considers giving gamers the same O-1 "exceptional ability" visas it awards elite athletes in soccer, American football, baseball, tennis and other traditional sports.

What makes the rise of e-Sports seem so sudden is the fact that it's happened almost entirely outside of traditional media. ESPN has dabbled in broadcasts, but for the most part, professional gamers live and play online, via streaming networks. "This is the first sport that's grown up and matured completely outside of linear TV," says Mike Sepso, co-founder of Major League Gaming, the largest online network for gaming content and the organiser of most major professional competitions.

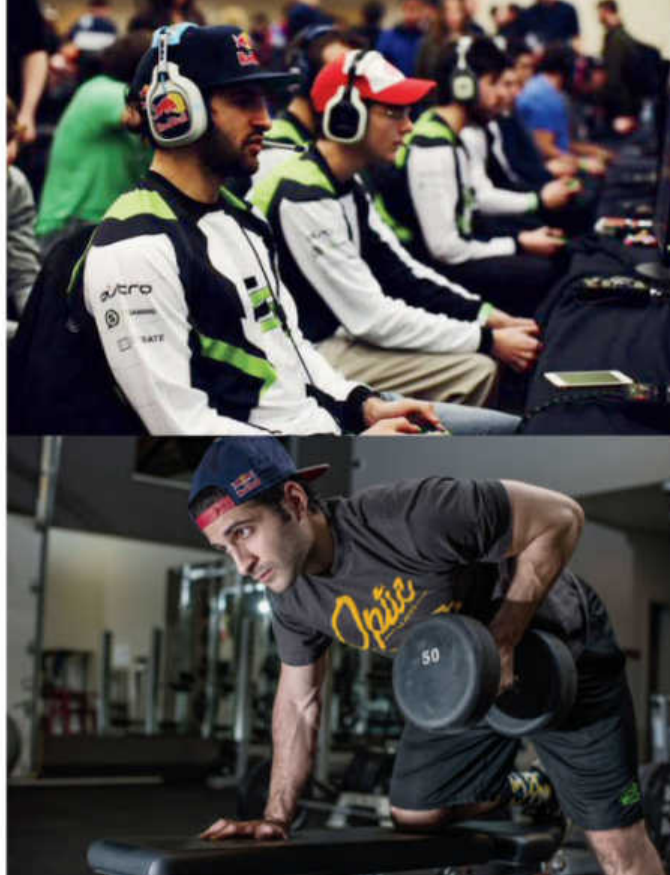
Gaming's growth numbers are staggering. When MLG.tv launched in December 2013, it logged a modest 323,000 hours viewed. Six months later, viewers consumed 5.96 million hours of content – up 1,745%. "It's still the early days," says Sepso, "but the reality is that the audience for gaming is so big. The most exciting thing is that it's truly global. When we broadcast, there are people in 130 countries watching."

"There's an entire generation of kids growing up and their television is live streams," says Chris Kluwe, a gaming fan who punted for the Minnesota Vikings for eight years before retiring from the NFL in 2012. "They can watch other people play games. That's where they get their entertainment."

Kluwe is an avid player who's been bullish about e-Sports for some time. But the true and near-term potential of gaming wasn't clear to him until he went to those sold-out *League of Legends* finals at the Staples Center. "It was a stadium filled with people watching something they really enjoyed, who knew when it was appropriate to react and how to react," he says. "It was awesome."

Kluwe believes that ultrafit video gamers represent the future of the sport. "The more in shape you are, the more fit you are, the longer you can concentrate in peak performance without any degradation of your ability," he says.

When I voice scepticism on the subject ("Video gamers as athletes, really? C'mon!") he dismisses my dismissal. "It may not have the same physical impact as something like football or soccer, but you still have to have reflexes that are on par with any of the major sports," he says. "If you look at the number of operations per second that *StarCraft* players do or how quickly *League of Legends* players react, that's the same level of perception and skill required to hit a 150km/h cricket ball or read an incoming blitz. It's not something just anyone can do."



Man at work.

Chaves credits his fitness for four Halo world championships.

● **THE FOLKS AT RED BULL EMPHATICALLY AGREE.** LAST SUMMER, the company invited Chaves and the other members of OpTic Gaming to Santa Monica, California, to take part in a week-long boot camp the company offers regularly to its elite athletes in sports like surfing, snowboarding, BMX and motocross. This was the first time the company had invited professional video gamers to take part.

There, Andy Walshe, a stout, jovial Sydney-born and bred biomechanist who serves as director of high performance at Red Bull, oversees an in-house research division set up to "hack the talent" from the "extraordinary cross-section of special individuals" in the Red Bull family of athletes, as he puts it. Specifically, Walshe sets out to identify how the best performers in the world do what they do, then how to isolate and teach those skills to others.

Elite gamers, he says, are just as special as elite golfers or big-wave surfers. The only difference is where that special ability resides. "They have a very high-level cognitive-executive function," he says. "When we first started the program, even the gaming community was like, 'What the hell are you talking about?'"

To Walshe, the question of whether gamers are actually athletes isn't really a question at all. "For me, it's very simple: it's about the high level of skill required, a combination of physical and cognitive ability, as well as high stakes and big stages – and they're performing on cue. They have to go out and deliver as required. That's the classic definition of any of our sporting programs."

What's more, he says, "They're doing things – decision making, information collecting, internal communication – at a level and a pace we've never seen before in any other sport."

In addition to mood, says Walshe, exercise is crucial for focus, which must be maintained for hours at a time. "The fact that they're stationary for long periods makes the fitness and health improvements even more critical."

"These types of competitions are not about just making good decisions but making them when you're exhausted," says Dr Timothy Church, professor of preventive medicine at the

Pennington Biomedical Research Center in the US and a leading expert on the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle. “Physically working out builds the endurance of your muscles, lungs and heart – and, surprisingly, your brain as well. This is one of the main reasons the military keeps the Special Forces in such great shape. Many world-class poker players figured this out years ago as well.”

Mike Sepso of Major League Gaming is seeing more and more players thinking like Chaves. In fact, Doug “Censor” Martin, a top player on team FaZe Clan, one of OpTic’s main rivals, now broadcasts his own fitness and health videos and plays in a tight, sleeveless jersey that shows off his ripped arms. “It’s not ‘athletic’ per se, but it requires insanely quick reflexes, visual acuity and mental alertness for long periods of time,” Sepso says. “And without good fitness and nutrition, those things will suffer, as will the length of your career. The fitter you are, the longer you can play at a high level.”

● **DEPENDING ON THE DAY’S SCHEDULE, CHAVES WORKS OUT** at 8:30am, after his breakfast or in the middle of the afternoon, around three, when he’s finished his first chunk of daily practice. There’s a standing invitation for anyone in the house to come along and often at least one roommate, if not several, take him up on it.

For a while Haag, aka NaDeSHoT, was a regular at the workouts, but by winter he was too deep into competition and team management to do much more than hole up in his room playing *Call of Duty* while shouting live commentary for fans into his headset. “I worked out with him all last year,” Chaves says as he prepares to head to the gym for an afternoon session. “He now knows all the stuff he needs to do.”

You can see NaDeSHoT, who has a slender, string-bean build, in several of Chaves’ YouTube videos, including his series of four-minute hotel-room workouts that “saved” him during periods of extreme travel, he says. “I get sad if I can’t work out.”

Chaves is quick to point out that he’s not a professional trainer. “I try to avoid teaching people how to squat,” he explains. “I don’t have a certificate.” He will, however, gladly lead workouts and if he sees someone with egregiously poor form, he’ll certainly point that out. Mostly, though, he’s content to act as a motivator.

Currently, apart from Marcus Blanks, his most diligent disciple is Will “BigTymeR” Johnson, a 23-year-old from Arkansas who once had a Guinness World Record as the highest-earning *Call of Duty* player ever. Johnson retired from gaming last year to pursue stock trading – from his bedroom, on the first floor – but remains part of the OpTic family as a coach and popular personality (as his 450,000 Twitter followers and the thousands of fans of his daily streams would no doubt attest). “He’s got us on some pretty animalistic workouts,” Johnson says of Chaves.

The two hop in Johnson’s Mercedes C63AMG to head to the gym, a sprawling suburban complex with a large pool, a massive climbing wall and multiple full-size basketball courts. Here, last summer, Chaves accepted the challenge of one of his *Halo* teammates and completed “Murph”, a notoriously brutal CrossFit workout that requires a 1.6km run, 100 pullups, 200 pushups, 300 squats and another 1.6km run, all as quickly as possible. Elite CrossFitters can get close to a preposterous 25 minutes. Chaves finished in 55 minutes. As we walk in, he says he plans to try and improve that time next summer, after he bulks up. But today, he says, will be a leg day. So he loads several 20kg plates onto a bar and commences squatting while looking entirely too comfortable.

“Watching Mike gets me going,” Johnson says. “He’s my motivation – always pushing limits. There’s a lot of strength in that little man.” ■

The OpTic-Fast Flamesword Workout

Mike Chaves of OpTic Gaming spends a lot of time on the road (and a lot of time seated). To offset that sedentary lifestyle, he relies on a rigorous “hotel-room workout”, which takes just four minutes to complete. –CHRISTINA SIMONETTI

DIRECTIONS:

■ Perform each movement for 20 seconds, followed by 10 seconds of rest. Beginners can repeat the moves for four minutes, but with experience, you can progress to eight minutes (40 seconds on and 20 seconds off) or 12 minutes (60 seconds on, 30 seconds off). This approach is similar to Tabata training, a popular interval scheme for conditioning and fat loss. Begin with a warm-up. “I do the entire routine slowly for the first two minutes to warm up my body,” Chaves says, “and then I jump into it.” So begin with a walk-through to get your body used to the motions and get the blood flowing. When you’re ready, start the clock and go fast.



1. Superman

■ Lie facedown on the floor; extend your arms and legs. Brace your abs and squeeze your glutes. Simultaneously raise your legs behind you and your arms in front of you while arching your back to lift your torso off the floor so you look like Superman flying. Hold for one second, lower your limbs, repeat. If it’s too difficult, start by raising only your torso and arms and work up to using your legs.

2. Dip

■ Place your hands about shoulder-width apart on the seat of a chair. Suspend your body over the chair and

walk your feet out in front of you so your legs are extended. Lower your body until your upper arms are parallel to the floor and then press back up. If this bothers your shoulders or elbows, Chaves suggests doing pushups instead.

3. Squat

■ Stand with your feet at shoulder width and toes turned out a few degrees. Bend your hips back but keep your chest facing forward and lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Extend your arms in front of you for balance.

Push your knees apart as you lower so you can sink as deep as possible but don’t let your lower back round.

4. High Knees

■ Stand in one spot and alternately raise your knees as high as you can, as quickly as you can. Your knees should reach above your hips on each rep. Swing your arms in time with your knees as if you were running.

This move hits your abs and legs while raising your heart rate to burn more calories.

Cooldown

■ Pace back and forth to get your heart rate down.

“The goal is to get your heart rate down in less than five minutes.”



The dip. See No. 2.



The squat. See No. 3.

The new rules of booze

For a long time the alcohol guidelines for people who are serious about fitness came down to “avoid it” – but new research has changed that. Training and tippling really can go hand in hand.

01

DRINK YOUR FIVE (UNITS) A DAY

● Despite what you might have heard, having a cheeky beer won't waste all your muscle tissue or cause your testosterone levels to nosedive. “People who say that forget that the body actually produces a small amount of alcohol naturally as a byproduct of processing substances such as sugar alcohols,” says nutritionist and sports scientist Laurent Bannock. “Our systems are designed to use and dispose of

alcohol in small quantities anyway, so the idea that you need to avoid it entirely simply isn't true.”

But how much booze can you consume in one sitting before your body starts to suffer? A study published in the journal *Sports Medicine* established 0.5g alcohol per kilo of your bodyweight as the limit, which equates to five units – or three 330ml bottles of beer – for an 80kg man. Not bad, eh.





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02

KEEP IT LEAN

● One of the main reasons that regular drinking leads to weight gain is that the body prioritises metabolising alcohol ahead of everything else, according to a study published in the *American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition*. This reduces its ability to process fats and carbohydrates, which it instead stores as fat. To avoid this problem, stick to eating lean protein sources with plenty of green veg before and after a big night out. “Chicken breast and venison are among the leanest and most nutrient-rich,” says functional medicine consultant and personal trainer Aaron Deere.

03

LEARN TO BEAT HANGOVERS

● Even if you rarely drink, chances are you’ll fall off the wagon at some point – and at this point, it’s all about damage limitation for the inevitable hangover. “The metabolic pathways that your body uses to process alcohol rely on a compound called N-Acetylcysteine (NAC),” says Deere. “If you don’t have enough NAC, it’ll hamper your body’s ability to process all the alcohol you’ve consumed. To counteract this and reduce the length and strength of your hangover, take an NAC supplement before going to bed at the end of a night out, ideally with 500ml-1L of water to help rehydrate yourself.”

04

WIN THE HUNGER GAMES

● “One of the biggest issues with consuming alcohol is that it reduces your inhibitions, which makes you far more susceptible to making poor nutritional choices,” says Bannock. Can’t say no to a greasy kebab on your stumble home? It might be worth tailoring your drinking to avoid stimulating your appetite unnecessarily. A study from the journal *Pharmacology, Biochemistry & Behavior* found that the histamine in red wine ramps up your levels of the hormone cortisol and with it, your appetite, as do most blood sugar-spiking mixers. The good news is the study also established that beer can help to suppress your hunger by releasing a compound called GLP-1. Our advice: stick to low-sugar mixers such as soda water or even just water.

05

HAVE THREE DAYS OFF IN A ROW

● Regular drinking – which is classified as three to four units most days or every day – can put significant strain on your liver over time, which can lead to health issues including liver disease. But that doesn’t mean you have to give up the post-work schooners entirely. According to the Royal College of Physicians in Britain it takes two to three days for liver cells to recover after processing alcohol, so if you can manage three consecutive booze-free days each week your liver should be in the clear. What’s more, American studies have found that indulging within these limits can even reduce the risk of dementia and heart disease. Your new golden rule? Guarantee three booze-free days every week with the two-card system: you start each week with two drinking cards and you can play them on any two days. Just remember the amount you can drink is still governed by Rule 1.

06

SLEEP IT OFF


● Ever spent Friday night worrying about how much your burgeoning drunkenness will affect your on-field performance the next day? According to research published in the *Journal Of Science And Medicine In Sport*, you shouldn’t – provided you allow yourself enough time to sleep it off before kick-off. The study put a group of rugby players through strength and conditioning tests the morning after drinking a ridiculous 6L each. Surprisingly, the only negative affect was a reduction in lower-body strength, which the researchers attributed to a lack of sleep – the subjects averaged one to three hours – rather than the alcohol intake.

The closer you can get to seven hours’ kip the better. If you’re struggling to nod off, try snacking on a tryptophan-rich, sleep-hormone improving banana before hitting the sack – it’ll help soak up the booze, too. ■

Give up alcohol for a month and sign up to Ocsobor (ocsobor.com.au) to help the Life Education charity.

Grease debt crisis: Alcohol weakens resistance to crap takeaways.





Pure blonde:
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litre of beer
before his
body starts
to suffer
damage.**



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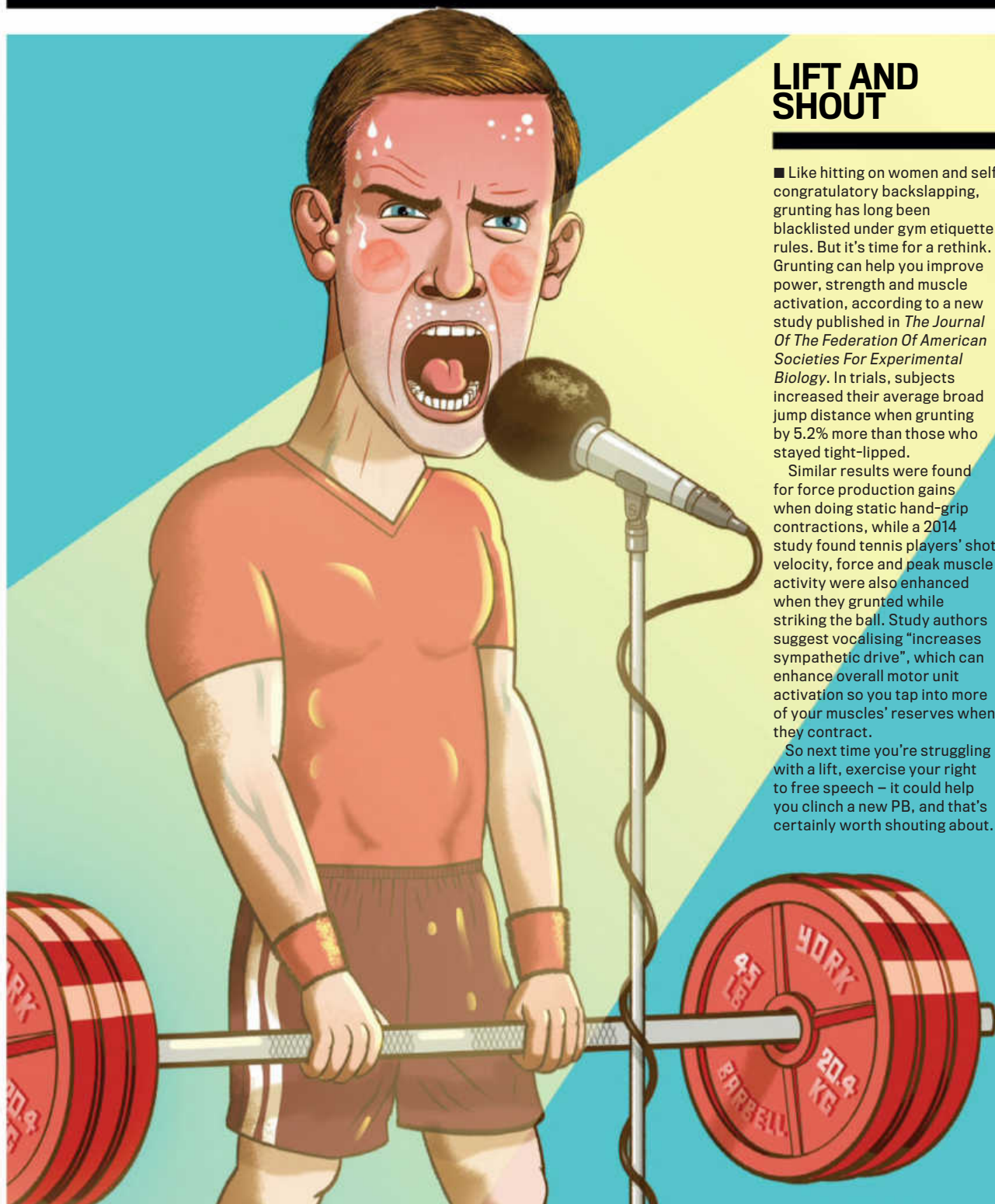
The Body Book

LIFT AND SHOUT

■ Like hitting on women and self-congratulatory backslapping, grunting has long been blacklisted under gym etiquette rules. But it's time for a rethink. Grunting can help you improve power, strength and muscle activation, according to a new study published in *The Journal Of The Federation Of American Societies For Experimental Biology*. In trials, subjects increased their average broad jump distance when grunting by 5.2% more than those who stayed tight-lipped.

Similar results were found for force production gains when doing static hand-grip contractions, while a 2014 study found tennis players' shot velocity, force and peak muscle activity were also enhanced when they grunted while striking the ball. Study authors suggest vocalising "increases sympathetic drive", which can enhance overall motor unit activation so you tap into more of your muscles' reserves when they contract.

So next time you're struggling with a lift, exercise your right to free speech – it could help you clinch a new PB, and that's certainly worth shouting about.





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Practice makes muscle

Perfect your technique on the squat, bench press and deadlift – and break all your PBs in four weeks.

By Greg Nuckols

Strength isn't a goal as much as it is a habit. Practise it regularly and it will come naturally. For the next four weeks, forget about all the fancy, newfangled exercises you learnt from YouTube and rededicate yourself to the basics – you'll need only a handful of lifts to change your body and set big personal bests. By this time next month, you'll be putting up huge numbers in the gym and seeing new muscle in the mirror as a result.

Off your chest. The better your technique, the safer you'll be handling heavy weights, and the faster you'll make progress.



HOW IT WORKS

■ To build total-body brute strength, you need to squat, bench and deadlift. These lifts let you load the most weight and activate the most muscle. The only drawback is that they're hard on the body. To get good at them, you have to do them a lot. But how can you get the practice you need without overtraining and getting injured?

The answer is to vary the intensity. You can train all three lifts in a workout and repeat them several days a week if you change the sets, reps and weights you're using every time. The goal is to feel fresh each workout so you ingrain good technique that allows you to handle heavy weights proficiently when you test your maxes.

Be prepared for it to feel too easy at first. The weights and volume will increase each week, so even if you're not leaving the gym feeling crushed, trust that your training is working. You'll know for sure in four weeks when you lift weights that would have flattened you before.

Directions

Perform each workout (Day I, II, III and IV) once per week, resting a day between each session. The weights you use for the squat, bench press and deadlift will be based on your max in each lift – the heaviest load you can handle for one rep. Test these numbers before you begin the program or take your best guess. (But be conservative; it's better to go too light than too heavy.)

The percentages of your maxes that follow cover the first week of the program. Increase them as you become stronger and more confident.

Day I

1 SQUAT

Sets: 4 Reps: 4 at 70% of max

Grasp the bar as far apart as is comfortable and step under it. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and nudge the bar out of the rack. Step back and stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and toes pointed out slightly. Take a deep breath and bend your hips back, then bend your knees to lower your body as far as you can without losing the arch in your lower back. Extend your hips to come back up.



SIT BACK, AS IF LOWERING YOURSELF INTO A CHAIR, AND PUSH YOUR KNEES OUTWARD.

2 BENCH PRESS

Sets: 3 Reps: 2 at 80% of max

Grasp the bar just outside shoulder width and arch your back so there's space between your lower back and the bench. Pull the bar out of the rack and lower it to your sternum, tucking your elbows about 45 degrees to your sides. When the bar touches your body, drive your feet hard into the floor and press the bar back up.



3 DEADLIFT

Sets: 4 Reps: 3 at 75% of max

Stand with feet about hip-width apart. Bend your hips back to reach down and grasp the bar so your hands are just outside your knees. Keeping your lower back in its natural arch, drive your heels into the floor and pull the bar up along your shins until you're standing with hips fully extended and the bar is in front of your thighs.

4 CHINUP

Sets: 3 Reps: As many as possible

Hang from a pullup bar with hands shoulder-width apart and palms facing you. Pull yourself up until your chin is over the bar. Don't let your body swing.

Day II

1 SQUAT

Sets: 3 Reps: 1 at 85% of max

2 BENCH PRESS

Sets: 4 Reps: 4 at 70% of max

3 DEADLIFT

Sets: 3 Reps: 2 at 80% of max

4 LATERAL/REAR-DELT RAISE COMBO

Sets: 4 Reps: 8, 8, 8, 20-30

Hold dumbbells at your sides and bend your hips back slightly so your torso is about 45 degrees to the floor. Keep your lower back in its natural arch. Raise your arms out to your sides until they're parallel to the floor. On your last set, reduce the load and perform reps to burnout.



Day III

1 SQUAT

Sets: 3 Reps: 3 at 75% of max

2 BENCH PRESS

Sets: 3 Reps: 1 at 85% of max

3 DEADLIFT

Sets: 4 Reps: 4 at 70% of max

4 WEIGHTED CHINUP

Sets: 3 Reps: 6-8

Perform the chinup as described in Day I, but wear a weighted belt or hold a dumbbell between your feet to add resistance.



Day IV

1 SQUAT

Sets: 3 Reps: 2 at 80% of max

2 BENCH PRESS

Sets: 4 Reps: 3 at 75% of max

3 DEADLIFT

Sets: 3 Reps: 1 at 85% of max

4 LATERAL/REAR-DELT RAISE COMBO

Sets: 3 Reps: 12-15



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THE EXPERT

NAME:
GREG WHYTE
SPECIALITY:
SPORTS
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WHAT TRAINING METRICS SHOULD I BE TRACKING?

The former Olympic pentathlete wants you to keep an eye on your metrics – but be wary of data overload.

Tracking data isn't the preserve of elite athletes. Monitoring your training is about trying to optimise your performance, whatever your level. Tracking progress is a training aid – it's not a replacement for working hard – and you have to be careful not to become obsessed with it. Professional athletes have time and resources to track data, chasing tiny improvements, but if you're new to it you can make huge gains very rapidly by tailoring your program to make improvements where you need them.

TAKE HEART

Heartrate is the number one thing to monitor. It's directly linked to exercise intensity, so you can use it to tell how hard you're working. It also takes into account daily differences such as how fatigued you are, what time you train, if you've had anything to eat or if you're low on energy. It gives you a true sense and marker of how hard you're working. A good starting point is to measure your resting heartrate every single morning because fluctuations will give you an early warning if you're overtraining,

allowing you to back off when necessary.

Depending on what you're training for, speed is another important metric. On the bike or the rower or running, you can use it to set a target, although you shouldn't see it as something to stick to rigidly – it's just a marker. Stay flexible and don't try to do anything daft like try to beat it when you're ill or hungover.

Heartrate and speed are both metrics that measure things directly. They're robust and reliable so you can trust the data. When you track calorie burn, you have to estimate the results using an algorithm. That's not to say it's not worthwhile but you have to be more careful – these things are better used to build a profile over time rather than to provide instant feedback.

INSIDE TRACK

Once you've been tracking your data for a while, I'd encourage you to internalise the process to an extent. When I work with elite athletes, they can tell me their heartrate or speed without looking at anything. Obviously, that's partly because they spend so much time training, but the key point is not to make your tracking equipment a crutch. As time goes on, you should start to need it less and less.

Forgo tracking and you'll miss out on valuable experience, especially if you're new to training. Knowing your speed or your heartrate lets you understand exactly where your ability level is and gives you the confidence to improve.

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How to use...



YOUR TOOL FOR...

- **ENDURANCE**
- **CORE STRENGTH**
- **GRIP**

the Bulgarian bag

Want a workout tool that'll give you sports-specific rotational strength and lung power to match? Don't worry – it's in the bag.

It's time to feel the force – centrifugal style. Bulgarian bags – those sand-filled hunks of leather and plastic – don't come any heavier than 20kg, but weight's not the point here: by swinging or whirling them around, you'll work your muscles from every angle. They're

a test of full-body co-ordination that's also easy on your joints, which is why hard-training Eastern European wrestlers have been using them for a decade. Twice a week, complete this circuit three times, doing each move for 30 seconds, to bag a better body.



1 ROTATIONAL SWING

Grab the bag by both handles and swing it around in front of you in a circle, dipping slightly at the knees as it goes through its lowest arc. Keep a steady pace and change direction after 15 seconds.



2 LATERAL SWING

Swing the bag up to your shoulder, then step to one side slightly and swing the bag to that side, as if you're swinging a scythe (if you've ever done that). Repeat on the other side. Continue, alternating sides.



3 SWING TO SQUAT

Swing the bag between your legs, dipping slightly, then raise it over your head and onto your shoulders. Lower into a squat, then take the bag off your shoulders as you come up and go straight into the next rep.



4 LATERAL LUNGE

Put the bag on your shoulders, holding it securely at each end. Take a big sidestep and lower until you feel a stretch through your groin. Return to the start and repeat to the other side.



5 HALO

Hold the bag overhead and rotate it around your head. When you finish a rotation in one direction, switch directions.



6 ALTERNATING GRAB

Holding the bag by its top handle, pull it up slightly and change hands, absorbing the weight of the bag. Continue switching hands, going as fast as possible.

Stretch it out.
Conditioning your
connective tissue could
prevent a nasty injury.



THE EXPERT

NAME:
STEVE
MAXWELL

SPECIALTY:
STRENGTH &
CONDITIONING

SHOULD I TRAIN MY CONNECTIVE TISSUE?

Martial artist turned strength and conditioning coach Steve Maxwell says your fascia needs attention.

Is gym training helping you stay free of sports injuries? It's unlikely. Many injuries come from awkward collisions, falls and impacts that damage your joints. Gym training will make you stronger, but it won't protect against these injuries because you always use safe, specific movement patterns when you lift weights. All the calf raises in the world won't help you if you roll your ankle.

I'm 52 years old and have been training in grappling-based sports including wrestling, judo and Brazilian jiu jitsu for over 30 years, all of which place considerable strain on your joints. Most of the guys I started training with have had hip- and knee-replacement operations, but I can still train and move like a 30-year-old. The reason? I've spent years training my connective tissue – ligaments, tendons and fascia – that surrounds my ankle, knee, hip, elbow and wrist joints.

CONNECTIVE ISSUES

I first came across connective-tissue training through the Russian concept of "poisonous exercises" [see the box at right], which place your joints in unnatural, stressful positions and force them to adapt without actually injuring them. It works like a vaccination that

introduces a small amount of a disease into your body so it adapts to defend against it.

The key is to build up your connective tissue's tolerance to these positions slowly because too much strain too soon will lead to injury. If you imagine a pain scale where one feels fine and ten is agony, you should stop

immediately when your discomfort level reaches four. Over time, your capacity to push these biomechanically bad positions further and hold them for longer will increase, significantly reducing the risk of injury when your joints are forced into these positions unexpectedly during sports.

ACID REFLEX

In addition to enhancing your connective tissue, poisonous exercises also recondition your nervous system so it doesn't perceive these unnatural positions as a threat. This is very important because a lot of muscular injuries are the result of an overactive stretch reflex, where your body involuntarily contracts muscles if they're placed in unfamiliar positions.

It's impossible to injury-proof your body completely, but training your connective tissue will reduce the risk significantly and keep your joints functioning healthily into later life.

WHAT'S YOUR POISON?

Build your injury immunity. Do this mini-workout as a twice-weekly warm-up drill, stopping each exercise when you reach a discomfort level of four out of ten.

ANKLES AND KNEES

Stand with feet hip-width apart. Slowly roll onto the outside edge of one foot and the inside edge of the other. Then roll the other way to complete one rep. Once you're comfortable with this, perform a quarter squat, then a half squat, between rolls.



WRISTS

Get on all fours with the back of your right hand on the floor and the pit of your elbow forwards. Perform a knee pushup, then switch hands and repeat. Easy? Do it in a standard pushup position, then with both hands in the palms-up position.



HIPS AND KNEES

Lower into a deep squat, with your palms on the floor in front of you for balance. Turn your feet outwards 45°, then slowly lower your right leg until your right knee and inside ankle bone touch the floor. Repeat on the other side. When it's easy, do it without using your hands.



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Numbers game.

What damper setting? It's simple: if you're a big guy, go for 8-9 and hit a lower stroke-per-minute 'rating'. Smaller? Set it at 6 or 7 and go faster.



Row like an Olympian

The 2K row is the gold standard of power endurance, and a guaranteed V-shape builder. Time to stick your oar in.

Rowing is hard, but if you want to see how you compare with the elite, the 2,000m is the benchmark. It's the distance of every Olympic event because it best emphasises endurance, power delivery and mental toughness. It's also one of the few forms of cardio that builds muscle, rather than eating it away. A 7min 30sec 2K row is considered respectable, 7min is impressive. Here's how to get there – or at least beat your mates' times.

THE FORM Yanking at the handle like a lawnmower won't cut it. This is how the pros pull.



1 THE CATCH

Keep your arms straight, head up and upper body leaning forward from the hips. "Your shins shouldn't go past vertical," says David Hart of rowing machine company Concept2. "And don't overreach."



2 THE DRIVE

Start the drive by pressing with your legs. As you move back, lean back slightly, then finally add the arm pull. "Your hands move in a straight line to and from the flywheel," says Hart.



3 THE FINISH

"At the end of the stroke, your upper body should be leaning back to about 11 o'clock. Keep the handle held lightly below your ribs and don't 'chicken wing' it – keep your elbows in."



4 THE RECOVERY

"Extend your arms until they're straight, then lean forward from your hips. Once your hands have cleared your knees, allow your knees to bend and slide the seat forward."

THE PLAN Devised by Gym Jones coach Pieter Vodden, this 2K-smashing strategy takes just 11 days to complete. Repeat the whole thing until your time reaches "respectable".

DAY 1

Row for 30sec with 90sec recovery. Start by aiming to go 150m per 30sec period and increase that by 1m per round. Take it up as far as you can – 170 is the goal.

DAY 2 REST

DAY 3

Row 10 x 500m with 1min rest. Try to hold your intended 2K "split time" pace – so if you're shooting for a 7min 2K, you need to hit 1min 45sec. On the last round, go all out.

DAY 4/5 REST

DAY 6

Warm up for ten minutes, then row 1,000m as fast as possible.

DAY 7 REST

DAY 8

Warm up for ten minutes, then row 1,500m as fast as possible.

DAY 9/10 REST

DAY 11

Warm up for 20 minutes at a slow pace, with occasional "power tens" – ten hard strokes at your target 2K pace. Then row 2,000m as fast as possible.

MAKE THE GRADIENT

Boost your pedal power for the climb and the commute.



THE COACH

Joe Hewitt is a strength and conditioning coach who oversees development of fitness programs for endurance cyclists, Paralympians and BMX squads. He also trained the British team for the 2014 European Track Championships in Guadeloupe, where they topped the medal table with six golds.

THE GOAL

"This workout will prepare you for the physical demands of tackling hill climbs whether you're riding for fun or competition," says Hewitt. "The first three moves will help you build lower-body strength and power to generate force on the pedals – especially important when fighting gravity on hills. The latter three moves will develop your core and upper-body stability so you can hold yourself out of the saddle for the steepest climbs. These exercises also focus on the muscles that cross the knee and hip – the primary joints that are stressed when cycling – to reduce the risk of injury."

THE WORKOUT

"Aim for three rounds of this circuit in total. Rest for 60 seconds between exercises and two minutes between rounds. Rest slightly longer if you need so you can maintain good form. If you're struggling, reduce the weight. Do this circuit twice a week but not on the same day as big rides to avoid overtraining. Those new to training should aim for high reps and use a low weight to get used to the movement patterns." ■



1 KETTLEBELL SUMO SQUAT

Place a kettlebell on the floor and stand over it. Squat down, keeping your weight on your heels and pick up the kettlebell with straight arms, then stand up, driving your hips forwards. Lower until the weight touches the floor, then drive back up again.

Beginner 15–20 reps, light load

Intermediate 10–15 reps, medium load

Advanced 6–12 reps, heavy load



2 KETTLEBELL LATERAL LUNGE

Hold a kettlebell in front of you, elbows close to your body. Keeping your chest up, take a big step to one side and bend your leading leg to lower into a lunge, keeping both heels on the floor. Drive back powerfully to the start, then repeat on the other side to complete one rep.

Beginner 15–20 reps, light load

Intermediate 10–15 reps, medium load

Advanced 6–12 reps, heavy load



3 BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT

Hold dumbbells by your sides and place one foot on a bench behind you. Bend your front leg to lower, keeping your chest up and front knee in line with your toes. Pause, then drive back up through the heel of your front foot.

Beginner 15–20 reps, light load

Intermediate 10–15 reps, medium load

Advanced 6–12 reps, heavy load



4 TRX ROW

Hold the TRX handles and hang so your body forms a straight line, with your heels on the floor, your hips raised and your core braced. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and pull yourself up, drawing your hands towards your armpits. Pause, then slowly lower yourself back to the start position.

Beginner 5–10 reps

Intermediate 10–15 reps

Advanced 15–20 reps



5 TRX MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

Start in the top of a pushup position with your feet in the TRX stirrups. Keeping your hands on the ground, your shoulders locked and your core braced, bring one leg forwards so your knee comes towards your elbow. Return to the starting position, then repeat on the other side to complete one rep.

Beginner 5–10 reps

Intermediate 10–15 reps

Advanced 15–20 reps



6 GYM BALL HAMSTRING CURL

Lie on your back with your heels on a gym ball and squeeze your glutes to raise your hips. Bend your legs to 90° so the gym ball rolls towards you, pause, then roll it out until your legs are straight. Keep your arms by your sides on the floor for balance, or hold them across your chest so your core has to work harder.

Beginner 5–10 reps

Intermediate 10–15 reps

Advanced 15–20 reps

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DOWN THE HATCH

Supplements come in all shapes and sizes. Choose the delivery systems that work for you.

By Joy Ronson

■ No matter what fitness goal you're aiming for, there's a supplement out there designed to help you achieve it faster. Want more muscle? Try a protein shake. Interested in boosting your heart health? Pop a fish-oil softgel.

But what if you're tired of the same old shakes, pills and potions and want to try something a little different?

Now you can get your protein fix from beverages that taste like soft drink and chew your pre-workout booster like lollies. And if shakes are your thing, there are even great ones with multivitamins included. These are our favourite supplements that utilise unconventional delivery systems.



NOWADAYS YOU CAN GET YOUR SUPPLEMENTS IN A VARIETY OF FORMS.



CAPSULES

■ Having problems dealing with recovery after a hard session? Bulk Nutrients' ZMA reduces the time you're out by enhancing sleep, which aids in the restoration process. ZMA combines magnesium aspartate, zinc picolinate and vitamin B6 together in a 540mg serve.



CHEWS

■ Supplements aren't medicine but they're not lollies either. That doesn't mean they can't taste like it, though. If you'd rather nosh on your pre-workout supp than drink or swallow it whole, try Optimum Nutrition's AmiN.O. Energy Chewables. It's not as convenient as a powder – a serving is three chews – but the punch flavour tasted good to us.



SOFTGELS

■ Do you like the benefits of fish oil but can't stand burping up a pier at low tide? Nordic Naturals Ultimate Omega lets you swallow your fish oil in a mellow, lemon-flavoured softgel so you barely notice it going down (or coming back up). Third-party tested for purity, Nordic Naturals is one of the most trusted fish oils on the market.



LOZENGES

■ Remember when you were a kid and craved cough drops long after you were sick? Now you have an excuse to suck 'em again. GNC makes lozenges that provide 1,000mcg of vitamin B12, which is essential for energy production – no horse pills required. And, unlike those children's cough drops, these suckers are sugar-free – but still come in cherry flavour.



GELS

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SHOULD I BE LIFTING WEIGHTS WITHOUT SHOES?

Going barefoot in the gym is not trendy, but there may be benefits for unshod iron pumpers.



Yes

says Dr Emily Splichal, a doctor of podiatric medicine

Your foot is deeply integrated into how you activate your core. It's connected to your core through a set of muscles called the deep front line, which run from the bottom of your foot all the way up your thighs and attach to the pelvic floor. Any time you wear a shoe, you're cutting off your sensory connection with the ground as both your feet and the deep front line muscles enter what's called a reactive environment – they merely react to movement instead of anticipating stabilisation.

With shoes on, the muscles from your foot all the way up to your core are not engaging the weight fully or efficiently – this can only happen if your bare foot is directly in contact with the ground. The reactive

"IT'S HOW YOUR BODY EVOLVED TO STABILISE."

environment shoes create makes the stabilisation of the core less effective. The more stable your core is, the more weight you can lift.

Most athletes try to lift by tensing the active muscles instead of driving from the ground up with their feet – for example, in a squat you often see the lifter's knees buckling inwards, which means they're relying on their glutes to stabilise the movement.

If your feet are properly engaged, however, that creates optimal core tension and power through the deep front line muscular engagement, so the effectiveness of each rep is increased.

Feel vulnerable without shoes in the weights room? Well, if you drop a 60kg weight on your foot, a shoe's not going to protect you. Start walking barefoot and you'll find lifting barefoot comes naturally – it's the way your body has evolved to stabilise, after all.



No

says Olympic weightlifter Greg Everett, author of *Olympic Weightlifting: A Complete Guide For Athletes And Coaches*

No-one would tell a footballer to play without boots. It's no different with weightlifting. It's an entirely ground-based activity, so any instability at the level of the foot translates into instability throughout the musculoskeletal system that can result in bad form or even injury. Proper shoes provide a stable platform to lift from and eliminate this risk of imbalance.

A flat, hard sole with a raised heel allows your ankle a greater range of motion while keeping your foot stable. Weightlifting shoes improve all the big squat-based movements such as cleans and snatches by allowing you to push against the ground with no distortion through the foot because there is very little compression within the shoe. This is crucial to a good technical lift because you want to minimise the amount of force lost as you push against the ground.

"PROPER SHOES PROVIDE A STABLE PLATFORM."

Unfortunately, few people's feet and ankles function exactly as they should. A good shoe can eliminate imbalances caused by issues such as collapsed arches and immobile ankles and puts everyone on a level playing field. From my experience coaching and lifting, the only movement that could possibly benefit from going barefoot is a deadlift because it helps to be as close to the floor as possible.

If your goal is to be a good weightlifter – whether it's to succeed in competition or simply to hit your own personal targets – shoes will definitely help. There's a reason every single competitive weightlifter in the world wears shoes, and it's not fashion.

Cooking Instructions: Open pack.

Cooked and sliced **chicken** and **turkey** that you can enjoy cold or hot, straight out of the pack. New from Steggles.

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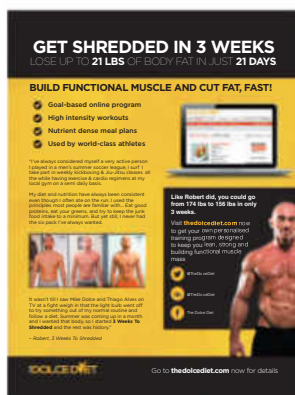
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INJURY-FREE FOOTY

Rugby union, league and Australian Rules football are hard-hitting sports that can batter even the biggest blokes.

People often think that football is dangerous. "There have been some horrific and well-publicised cases, but in reality the risk of catastrophic injury is lower than when you cross the road or travel in a car," says expert physio Nell Mead. Stats show the most common injuries in training are far less serious – and there are simple steps you can take to reduce the risk.

1 MUSCLE STRAIN

"The hamstrings and the gastrocnemius muscles of the calves both cover two joints, making them doubly vulnerable to strains and tears in contact and non-contact plays."

PREVENT IT

"Glute bridges and eccentric calf raises will keep your muscles flexible and strong. For the bridges, contract your glutes as you raise and lower for three sets of 20 reps. For the calf raises, stand on a step on the balls of both feet. Push up, then take one foot away and slowly lower your other heel as far as you can. Repeat on the other foot, building to three sets of 15 reps on each leg."

2 SHOULDER DAMAGE

"Most people who've played football consistently will have suffered some form of shoulder trauma, from inflamed ligaments to dislocations, especially when tackling opponents."

PREVENT IT

"I use abs wheels for each hand, but dumbbells also work – for shoulder strength and control. Start in a pushup position on your knees and, keeping your arms completely straight, roll each hand out at a 45° angle as far as you can under control, then reverse. Aim for three sets of ten reps, working to take your knees off the floor and to change the angle to 90°."

3 LUMBAR SPINE INJURY

"Tackles, hard landings and scrums can all compress the spine's discs temporarily. Unless you stretch and decompress your spine afterwards, the damage can build up and leave you with long-term disc problems and pain."

PREVENT IT

"You can decompress your spine and increase the flow of fluid around the discs by using a yoga brick. Alternate lying on your back and rocking your knees towards your chest for 30 seconds with placing the yoga brick under your pelvis and draping yourself over it for 30



Physiotherapist Nell Mead served in the army for 14 years, including seven seasons working with forces rugby teams.

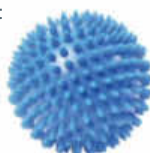


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"Portable and cheap, the massage ball is the unsung hero of the recovery world," says Mead. "Most injuries occur when muscles are tight rather than weak. Put the ball on the floor underneath you, let it dig into any tender and tight muscle, put as much weight on it as you can manage, then relax and let it sink into the tight muscle until you feel it relax."



seconds, relaxing as much as possible. Do this three times before bed."

4 ANKLE SPRAIN

"Ligaments contain proprioceptors – nerve cells that tell your brain where each part of your body is – and the better tuned these proprioceptors are, the faster you'll react to being off-balance and reduce sprain risk."

PREVENT IT

"Improve your proprioception with a wobble cushion – a circular cushion filled with air. Aim to stand on it for 60 seconds with your eyes open. Next, go for 30 seconds with your eyes closed." ■

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Running his own show: The outdoors is Paul McGeachie's new office.



PAUL McGEACHIE

AGE: 31
HEIGHT: 183CM
WEIGHT: 74KG
LIVES: SYDNEY
OWNS: ORIGINAL BOOTCAMP FRANCHISE, DEE WHY
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DEEWHY@BOOTCAMP.COM.AU

training then went through the Original Bootcamp Trainer Certification. "This involved being at the Institute of Fitness two nights a week and every second weekend for almost eight months," he says. Studying when you're working full-time can be hard, but being fit gave McGeachie an edge – another study from the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that regular aerobic exercise appears to boost the size of the hippocampus, the brain area involved in verbal memory and learning.

SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT

To run a successful boot camp, you need to be in excellent shape. "It's very important to be able to instruct the correct technique with the exercises we use," McGeachie says. Given I get to instruct some impressive individuals, it ensures you step up your game and continue to push your own fitness levels." McGeachie trains twice a day though the week and once on Saturday. "Sunday is rest day unless I'm training for a run or event," he says. "I try to do a resistance session and hard cardio session each day. I could combine the two but I enjoy training, so two sessions a day suits me fine. I'm also ensuring I include at least one yoga session a week to ensure I limit injuries through poor flexibility."

HAPPY DAYS

McGeachie now runs six boot camp sessions a week at Sydney's Dee Why Beach. He also runs sessions at a corporate gym and has some personal clients he trains one-on-one. Getting to work outside rather than being stuck in an office has made a huge difference to McGeachie's life. "I honestly can't believe I did it for so long," he says. "I now get to see the sun come up every day, and spend my mornings and evenings with great people. I seriously love it! I know it's clichéd, but I don't feel like I have worked a day since I left the office." Working outdoors offers countless benefits. Harvard research has found it can alleviate stress, boost mood and concentration levels and improve recovery time. No wonder McGeachie is so happy. "I say give your job the Sunday test," he says. "If your Sunday is filled with dread about going to work on Monday, it's time to make a change. Back yourself and do it!" ■

FROM PEN-PUSHING TO PUSHUPS

Paul McGeachie gave up his 9-5 office job to run his own Original Bootcamp franchise. And he hasn't looked back.

STUCK BEHIND A DESK

"I kind of fell into my job in the super industry when I left school," McGeachie says. "I think, like a lot of people, I didn't really get into the industry because I was passionate about it – it was because it was a secure job in a solid industry." Being behind a desk can take its toll on your health – a recent study in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that office workers spend 65 to 75% of their working hours sitting, increasing their risk of diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

MAKING A CHANGE

To get in better shape, McGeachie started training with the founders and head

trainers from Original Bootcamp (bootcamp.com.au) in Sydney's CBD. "I fell in love with the no-nonsense style of training and was amazed at the results I was getting," he says. Then one morning, he made a decision that would change everything: "It was halfway through a session on a Thursday morning and I was slogging my guts out with about 60 other people. I remember looking around and admiring the head trainers, Gunny and Chief, what they had created and what they got to do for a living. I made the decision that day that this is what I wanted."

EARNING HIS TICKET

First he had to get qualified, so McGeachie got his Certificate III and IV in personal

"I DON'T FEEL LIKE I'VE WORKED A DAY SINCE I LEFT THE OFFICE."



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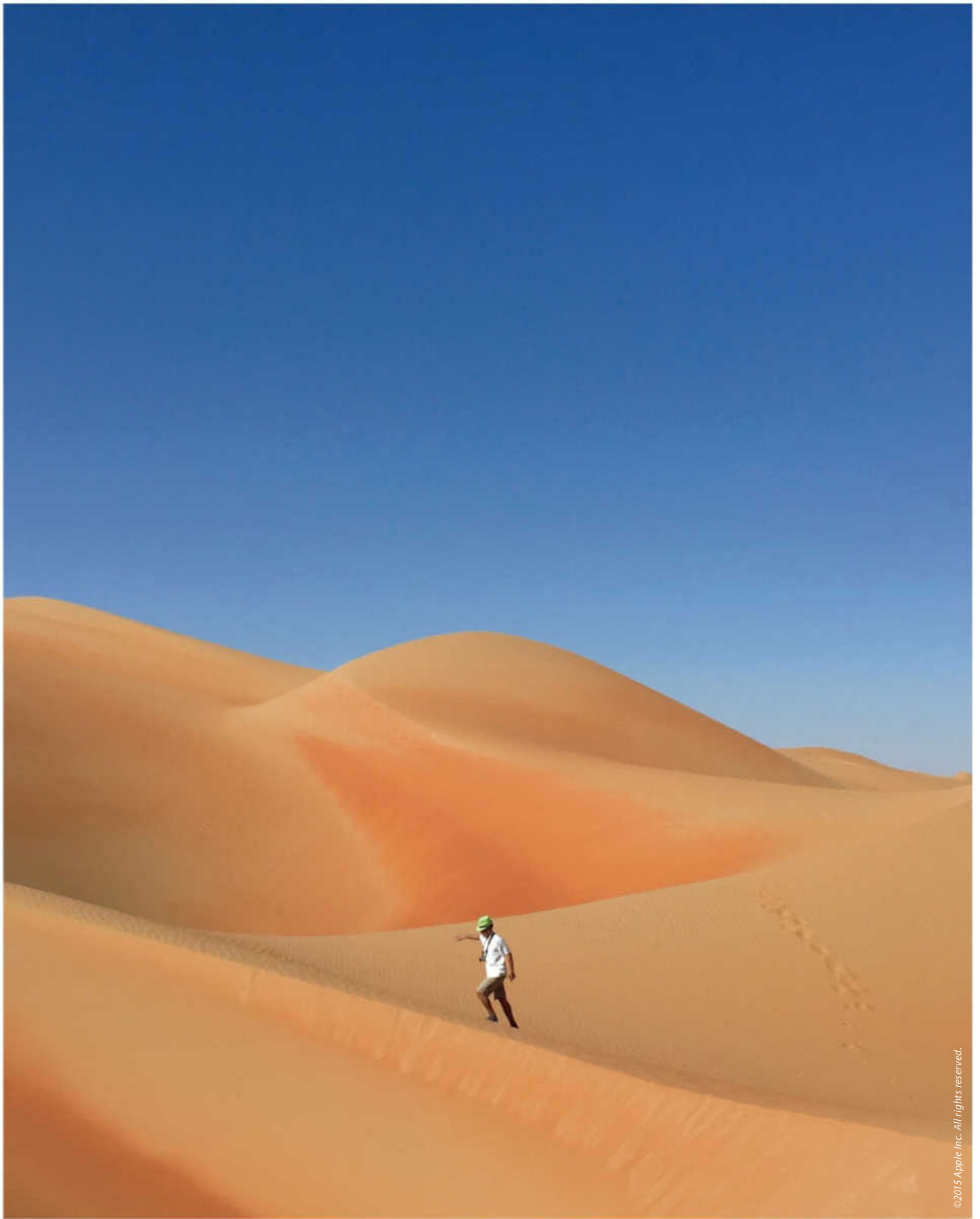


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